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STUDY OF BRAND AWARENESS AND BRAND IMAGE OF LAATUKESKUS, EXCELLENCE FINLAND

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Opinnäytetyön nimi Brändin tunnettuuden ja imagon kartoitus ja tutkimus, Laatu-keskus Excellence Finland		
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Tiivistelmä Kiinnostus laatukulttuuriin ja yhteistyön kehittämiseen on nähty parantavan kestäväää kansallista kilpailukykyä. Suomessa on jatkuvasti kasvava määrä järjestöjä, jotka kehittävät pitkällä aikavälillä johtamistaan ja toimintaansa, mikä tekee heistä reagoivampia ympäristövaatimusten muutoksiin. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan Laatukeskus, Excellence Finlandiin nykyistä brändin tunnettuutta ja brändi-mielikuvaa sekä miten nykyistä brändi-imagoa tulisi kehittää. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli brändin tunnettuuden määrittely sekä brändi-imagon kehittäminen yrityksen sidosryhmien näkökulmasta. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli myös lisätä brändi tietoisuutta sekä ylläpitää ja vahvistaa yrityksen brändi-uskollisuutta ja mainetta nykyisten ja potentiaalisten asiakkaiden sekä kansainvälisten kumppanien keskuudessa. Tutkimuskysymys oli, miten koettua brändi-mielikuvaa olisi parannettava. Teoreettinen viitekehys esittää brändin tunnettuuden ja brändi-imagon ja siihen liittyvien termien keskinäisiä yhteyksiä ja miten ne yhdessä vaikuttavat sidosryhmien kokemaan yrityksen mielikuvaan. Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisena Survey-tutkimuksena. Avoimet kysymykset lisäsivät tutkimukseen kvalitatiivista puolta. Tutkimuksen ensisijaiset tiedot kerättiin verkko-kyselylomakkeella ja toteutettiin suomeksi sekä englanniksi. Tiedonkeruussa käytettiin jäsenneltyjä ja puolistrukturoituja kysymyksiä. Kysely lähetettiin yhteensä 938 organisaatiolle, joista saatiin yhteensä 158 vastausta. Vastausprosentiksi tuli näin ollen kokonaisuudessaan noin 16,8%. Tärkeimmät johtopäätökset osoittivat, että nykyinen brändin mielikuva on melko hyvä ja myönteinen, mutta ei ole vielä täysin selkeä kaikille kohderyhmille. Myös brändin tunnettuutta pidettiin varsin hyvänä, mutta erinomaisena vain pienelle vähemmistölle. Esimerkiksi, jatkossa tarvitaan enemmän näkyvyyttä. Hyödyntämällä kyselyn tulokset ja ottamalla huomioon annetut kehitysideat, Laatukeskus pystyy laatimaan brändi-strategian ja kehittämään nykyistä brändiään ja imagoaan.		
Asiasanat Brändin tunnettuus, brändipääoma, brändi tunnistettavuus, brändi-imago, brändin positiointi, brändiuskollisuus		

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Abstract		
<p>Interest in improving quality culture and co-operation has been seen to improve sustainable national competitiveness. In Finland, there are constantly increasing number of organizations developing in the long-term their management and activities and this makes them more responsive regarding changes in the environment requirements. This study explores the current brand image of Excellence Finland and, how it should be improved.</p> <p>The aim of the study was to conceptualize brand awareness and develop the brand image from the view point of the company stakeholders. The objective of this study was to increase brand awareness likewise maintain and strengthen the brand loyalty and reputation among existing and potential customers as well as international partners. The research question was, how should the experienced brand image be improved.</p> <p>The relevant theory deals with brand awareness and brand image and moreover related terms. Also, clear definitions to each term are given. The interrelated connections of these terms are discussed, and how they together influence the brand image of a company seen by its stakeholders.</p> <p>This research was conducted as a quantitative survey study and open questions raised the qualitative aspect of the research. The primary data of the survey was collected by hosting an online questionnaire and conducted both in Finnish and English. In the data collection, structured and semi-structured questionnaires were used. The online questionnaire was sent in total to 938 organisations of which 158 responses were received. This gives the approximate response rate of 16,8%, based on the number of selected organizations.</p> <p>The main conclusions indicated the current brand image is quite good and positive, but not yet very clear to all the target groups. Also, the brand awareness was considered quite good, but excellent only for the small minority. For example, more visibility was needed. By utilising the survey results from the study and taking into consideration the recommendations given, Excellence Finland will be able to devise a strategy to build and develop their current brand image and increase brand awareness.</p>		
Keywords		
Brand awareness, brand equity, brand recognition, brand image, brand positioning, brand loyalty		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The need for this study arose from the company in question, Laatukeskus, Excellence Finland, which is a 100% owned company of the Laatuyhdistys ry (Registered Association). It is supporting the Association's activities by providing training and expert services. This research looks at the company's current brand image from the point of view of the existing and potential stakeholders. In this study, the brand name Excellence Finland is used to cover the entire activity and services of the company. The company structure will be explained more in detail in chapter 4.

At first, the idea started to develop after discussions and personal meetings with the Quality Manager, and later with the CEO and the Training Manager. In the first discussions occurred, that it had already been planned to implement an online questionnaire regarding the brand image, but had never being realized. The thesis subject was then agreed to be related to the need of this kind of evaluation of the brand image from the view point of the company stakeholders.

The idea further developed, since it occurred to be the company's 50th working anniversary in 2016, and to celebrate this, a brand renewal project was started. This project is now ongoing and includes a recruitment of new customers, which is aimed to increase their membership significantly as well as better support the customer's wishes and needs of the development. The target groups were thereafter confirmed to be three; key corporate- and supporting members as well as individual members. Namely, the target groups were agreed to be current customers, potential customers and current international partners.

The results of this thesis study will be used for the benefit of the Excellence Finland's brand renewal and recruitment project to develop their operations holistically, in particular to serve and meet the expectations of current and future customers of their services and products. Additionally, the results of this thesis will be expected to reveal holistic development of Excellence Finland's

brand image. This is supported by the relevant theory of brand awareness and brand image, where the latter is a product of brand associations.

The schedule of this project was to set until May 2016 regarding the results of the survey, and until December 2016 for the final report. However, the final report was later agreed to be ready until October 2017. The agreed schedule was managed like planned and the few changes in schedule of the final report were also approved and justified.

1.2 Research and Development objectives

At the beginning of the review of the brand phenomenon in general, it was discovered, that the concept has been attracting interest in business and management fields and plenty of previous studies were found. For example, the relatively recent study of Hammond (2008, 10) impresses, how brand is a major factor in a process of decision making. He also claims, how brand resides in the mind and – without a strong brand a company cannot differentiate itself or “*you are dead in the water*”. However, very little research was found on developing brand image, although it is very important part of any company’s marketing program. Further during this research, it was learned how brand image development is a process and strong brand image attracts your customers towards your products. A strong brand image is also a unique competitive tool to fight against your competitors.

In this study, the theoretical background involves the dimensions of the interlinkages and inequalities between brand awareness and brand image and introduces the related terms, but at first explains shortly the phenomenon of brand, supported by the relevant literature.

However, for example, Keller (2013, 76–77) determines, how brand awareness must be first created before the brand image. In addition, to create a positive brand image, strong favourable and unique associations towards a brand in people’s memory must be first created and be linked as well as implemented with marketing programs.

Onward, it is claimed that the world is moving into a people-driven economy, meaning the consumer is ‘in the seat of power’ - - and the brands engage consumers on the level of senses and emotions (Gobe 2009, 17–18). Hammond (2008, 18) also underlines the importance of holistic experience for the customer, and branding is therefore “looking out from the window of a customer”. Although this is important, influencing customer experiences, is argued for example by Hammond, to be basically all you need to build a brand. Albeit this can be agreed, the chapter of Brand experiences and Brand Halo determine this even further with the importance of Emotions, Perception, Innovation and Communication (mnemonic of EPIC), when the organizations want to build stakeholder loyalty (Hammond 2008, 20–21).

Regarding the empirical research, although the Excellence Finland’s services annually evaluate companies, covering external expert evaluations, self-evaluations and development validation, the company's own brand image and awareness of development has received less attention. Additionally, the Excellence Finland believes, that they are the standard-bearer for excellence in Finland, an active builder of networks and Finland’s messenger in quality affairs rooted in honesty and wellbeing. However, these assumptions have never been verified on behalf of their stakeholders.

Thus, this study is based on the need and interest of the case company to verify these assumptions by investigating this in detail likewise to discover the current stage of brand awareness, and how to develop brand image among the selected target groups with the quantitative approach, with qualitative effect.

The aim of the study is to conceptualize and measure the brand awareness and brand image of the case company. The research objective is to strengthen and develop current brand image and to increase brand awareness among the selected target groups. Secondly, objective was also to maintain and strengthen the case company’s brand loyalty and reputation among existing and potential customers as well as international partners.

1.2.1 Research and Development question

The research question based on the objectives and the problem definition above is;

How should the experienced brand image be improved?

Brand image is a very wide subject and could be defined for example as a current and immediate reflection, which the stakeholders have of the organization itself (Abratt& Kleyn 2012, 1055). The research question was chosen to be simple and relevant against to the thesis title. Furthermore, it was very soon noticed, that the related term of brand positioning (to name a few) was one major component to control the marketing strategy and to maximize potential benefit to the company.

Moreover, another main subject of this study is brand awareness, which is very much related to the brand image. It was again well-noticed, how it should be first recognized before the brand image and that brand awareness is also related to brand recognition and brand recall (Cf. Chapter 2.2) Additionally, brand awareness is a basic dimension of brand equity, which means the consumer must be aware of the brand to have brand equity. (Shimp 2010, 36–38.) Therefore, to understand this more deeply, for example the Keller's Customer-based Brand Equity Framework Model (in Figure 4) presents two levels of brand awareness, superficial level of brand recognition and a deeper form of brand awareness, brand recall.

In the questionnaire the respondents were asked, how to improve the current brand image of Excellence Finland. This was an open-ended question and as a result, many great developmental perspectives and ideas were given directly through the actual questionnaires. However, the author's own analysis and the selected theory support these replies and give deeper viewpoints to the research.

1.2.2 Limitations

Limitations in this study exist in three categories; focus, the information and research methods. The focus of this study on brand awareness and brand image are very wide subjects and therefore the topics are limited only to selected related terms, such as brand recognition and brand loyalty. Also, the other related terms of brand experiences and brand Halo®, present the perspective of the emotions of the people likewise communications, in this study. Secondly, it is presented how these are claimed to be vital for creating powerful brands.

The information of this research is mainly narrowed to the last 10 years, meaning the information is brief and being focused only on the selected terms and subjects relevant to this study in the last ten years. The material is collected from the books, international journals and chapters in edited online books, and websites. New and updated information from the Internet is important, because there the development seems to be faster than in traditional books. However, all the information cannot be trusted 100% and the author should be critical and question these materials, because the information changes so rapidly. Although, the main trends and the latest research is mirrored to this study.

The research methods were chosen and limited to be online questionnaire(s), in-depth interview(s) and internal documents. The answers of the interview consisted mainly about basic background information about the company. Therefore, the author had to search the company web pages and its printed material a lot, to understand the operations and practices. Also, the answers of the in-depth interviews were mostly the same that had already been published. However, this qualitative method of in-depth interviews to use open-ended questions proved to be vital to the company and they were very eager to cooperate with this project.

Limitations of the results was also concerning the public version of the final report. The customer names and the organization names the online questionnaires were sent to, was agreed to keep secret to protect the privacy of Excellence Finland. However, the main results were published but limited to exclude the amount of the respondents, only the number of organisations was

revealed, and not the amounts of respondents, which affects the response rate calculations upward. In other words, the results of the research will be used for the internal purposes and only the key findings will be published.

The benefit of this research for the case company could have been to understand and further develop Excellence Finland's brand strategy, with the clues and development hints shown in this study of brand image and brand awareness research and see the people as a powerful element of any branding strategy. However, this research will not concentrate on building brand strategies, only presenting some models to understand the dimensions of brand image and brand awareness and to analyse the questionnaire results to add a stakeholder's and potential customer's viewpoint to this subject.

1.3 The methodology and scope

The empirical research is based on a quantitative survey in cooperation with the case company, Excellence Finland. However, qualitative element is also added, because there are open-ended questions in the questionnaires.

This study is a survey research, but also some case study elements can be found. A case study usually prefers contemporary events and answers "how" and "why" questions. The research question applies in that way to a case study as well. In addition, a case study is used to contribute knowledge gained from individuals, organizations, groups or objects etc. The case study is then an in-depth study to collect both quantitative and qualitative data even at the same time.

On the other hand, in surveys is usually collected quantitative evidence. These both research methods comprise several data collection methods, like reports, interviews, observation and archives likewise questionnaires etc. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2010,109; Quinlan 2011, 183; Yin 2003, 7.)

This survey was implemented with online questionnaires, which are three in number and tailored to each group including open questions. This makes the form of the questionnaires both semi-structured and structured in form. Secondly, the in-depth interviews and internal documents of the company are a secondary data collection method. (Read more in Chapter 5.)

To process the research question, the chosen technique to analyze the quantitative data is statistical methods with pie charts and column diagrams. Secondly, qualitative data of open-ended questions are presented in tables modified from Survey Pal Excel sheets to exploit the inner thoughts of the respondents. Also, the qualitative part of the study was collected with in-depth interviews. In the end, the findings of this study are discussed and mirrored to the theoretical part of the study to evaluate the empirical research linked to the framework.

1.4 Structure of the study

In the figure 1 below the research structure of this study is illustrated. This helps to see the research in four docked headlines and the main subtitles and subjects.

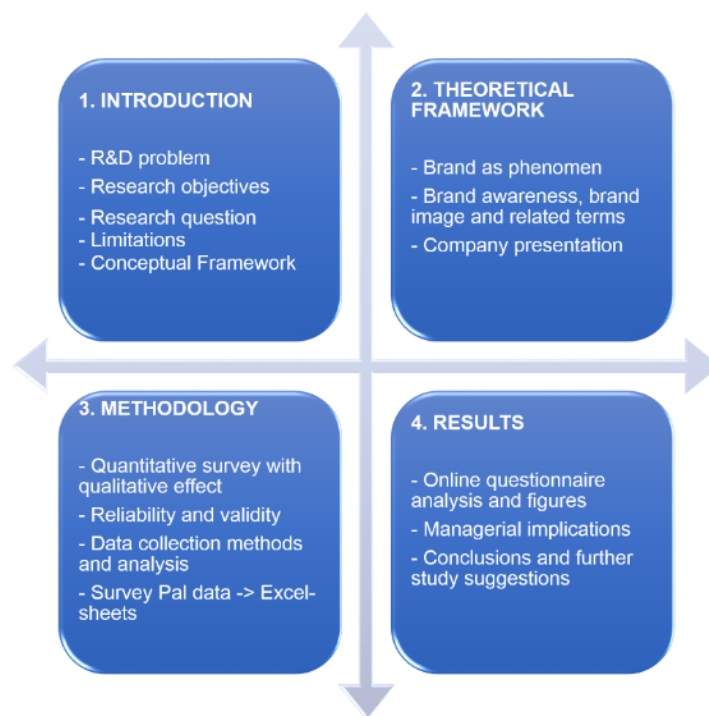


Figure 1: Research process of the study

Referring to this figure 1, the first part of the study introduces the research problem, the objectives, the research question, the limitations likewise the conceptual framework. After the introduction part, the thesis is continuing with the literature review concentrating on brand as a phenomenon. Then, the brand awareness and brand image are presented related to its similar concepts, which support the empirical research. The company presentation will be

introduced next to give a picture of the case company to a reader. After this the research methodology is presented. The last part of the study reveals the survey results and includes the analyses of the results as well as the future study development as well as managerial suggestions. The appendices are the last documents, which illustrate the research and the sent documents in practice.

The theoretical framework is followed by methodological issues presenting the principles of quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. However, the qualitative method is a secondary method, because there are open questions in the questionnaire as well. In the next chapter the conceptual framework of this study is first described.

1.5 Conceptual framework of the study

In this chapter are presented dimensions of brand image and brand awareness and their related terms. The theoretical framework of the thesis introduces previous research of the phenomenon of brand, brand awareness and its related terms based on categories such as brand image, brand recognition and brand loyalty.

The relevant literature and peer-reviewed journals regarding these mentioned topics in previous studies and knowledge provided from the company is chosen to support the thesis context. The theoretical framework was selected regarding the relevance against the thesis title. First, the brand is narrated shortly as a phenomenon. Secondly, the linkages between the terms related to brand awareness and brand image will be next discussed and different views of previous research studies will be compared and analysed.

The theoretical framework and the chosen quantitative data analysis method are mainly based on the research of Quinlan's (2011) Business Research Methods, and Research Methods in Business Studies of Ghauri and Grønhaug (2005 and 2010), and on relevant literature as well as peer reviewed articles and the information of internal documents of the company are given basis to the theoretical framework.

The theory is chosen to support the management to develop their operations holistically, to serve and meet the expectations of the current and potential stakeholders of the company's services and products. In addition, for example Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster (2008) are emphasizing on emotional connections in *building brand equity* with the key stakeholders (Cf. Figure 3) likewise a Customer-based Brand Equity Framework Model of Keller (Cf. Figure 4) presents two levels of awareness, brand recognition and recall. Thirdly, BrandAsset® Valuator (BAV) (Figure 5) model of brand equity measures differentiation, relevance, esteem and knowledge.

The questionnaires of the empirical research were implemented with Survey Pal software tool. The results are aimed to help the corporation to increase awareness of the current brand image knowledge from the view point of its different stakeholders and the answers will help to maintain and develop these relationships. This project is requested to help the company offer more clarified services to their current and potential customers and increase the quality and awareness of the corporation additionally, to meet the requirements and aspirations of its members better.

1.6 The analytical model

The analytical model of the theoretical framework is based on the Keller's CBBE-model and is combined to the questionnaire questions, which are divided into brand awareness and brand image related questions. However, to meet the expectations in this study, different theoretical models are modified and added in this analytical model. The responsive analysis to the acknowledgement, in term of to what extent the target groups of the case company (current and potential customers likewise international partners) know about the brand of Excellence Finland (brand awareness) and what kind of perceptions of the brand reflected by the brand associations are in the minds of the respondents (brand image). This theoretical model is comprised of the same elements as in Keller's model of brand awareness and brand image, but it gives new combination to other theories such as BAV-model of Aaker (2002) emphasizing the importance of brand equity and its dimensions of differentiation, relevance, esteem and knowledge. In this figure 2 below is illustrated the theoretical framework of the study.

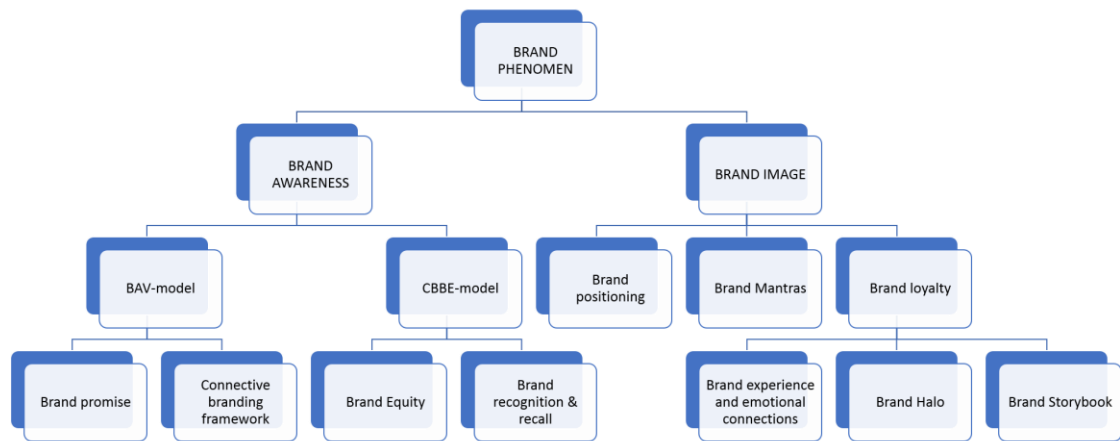


Figure 2: Analytical model of the theoretical framework

2 DEFINITION OF A BRAND (PHENOMEN) AND BRAND AWARENESS

Brands are part of the urban wallpaper and they have invaded all the sectors of our lives. However, we may think we are so developed, more knowledgeable and critical nowadays that we have antibodies to resist even the most sophisticated brand policies. But, the brands are also more consecrated and collocated in this new brand era. Products, which are derivatives of brands, are integral parts of society. Coca Cola or McDonald's are some examples of powerful brands, that have social acceptance, despite the negative viewpoints. Branding has been usually claimed to enter a phase of inexorable decline. Again, the roles of brands are more complex, pervasive as well as multifaceted, which take into consideration social criticism and public opinion. However, to face competitors, being ethical is the new axiom. Individual values are important to achieve economic aims and unique brands should pursue new aims linked to these values. Companies could also rethink the very nature of their brand, the emotional, mental and spiritual vision, which are more important than the material image and its being (Fioroni and Titterton 2009, 3–4).

Hammond (2008, 14) likewise argues with defining a brand as a “total sensory experience a customer has with your company and its product or service.” The experience here refers to any person who has ever been in contact whether with your company staff, product or service. Before creating any logos or col-

our schemes, customers should be put first, and consider in a customer perspective the right kind of relations and develop them. So-called 'cart-before-horse-ism' is the trouble some small businesses face, when they work anti-clockwise working first for the logos and symbols or corporate identities before the customer needs. The understanding of their company place in the whole brand scheme is then not understood properly. Instead, one should look through the window of a customer and not look out as a business owner. After that, it is possible to influence on your customers' experiences.

In the literature of branding, brand awareness consistently refers to a brand's quality likewise to brand's state or familiarity. Brand awareness could also be defined as the strength of the corporate brand node, or in other words, trace in memory. (Ormeno, 2007, 74.) To enlighten more, it is reflected by the ability of constituency to recognize or recall the corporate brand under any conditions. This is also supported by Ojasalo & Ojasalo (2010), when they determine brand awareness as a customer's ability to identify and remember the brand in all kinds of circumstances. In addition, Ormeno (2007), continues that when the constituencies recognize the company name or brand elements, they should recall the company in a certain industry or business. (Cf. more in Chapter 2.2) To conclude, brand recognition and the brand recall effect to the brand awareness level, as well is believed to be strongly dependent on both mentioned types of awareness performance. (Keller 1993, 1998, 50; Rossiter and Percy, 1997, 113 cited in Ormeno, 2007, 75.)

Again, Ojasalo & Ojasalo add, how the most significant element of brand awareness is the brand name, which generally creates symbolic significance likewise is important part of marketing communications. (Ojasalo & Ojasalo 2010, 240.) However, it can be noted that just a good brand name is not enough. Therefore, previous studies explain this further, for example Pulkkinen (2003) states, how a good brand name is well-known enough and clearly distinguished from the competitors. Also, the brand name should be able to redeem the given promises again and again to achieve as well as to maintain a unique place for customer's minds. Additionally, brand promise should be relevant to customers, both at the level of knowledge and further at the operational level. (Pulkkinen, 2003 52.)

2.1 Building brand equity

According to Shimp (2010) brand awareness is also a basic dimension of brand equity, meaning that a brand has no equity unless the consumer is at least aware of the brand. To maintain high brand awareness is a challenge by all established brands. Again, to build a strong brand equity, the company should shape how the customers think and feel about one's product or service. The experiences around the brand should be right types. The author continues, how this is important to achieve specific, positive thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions and perceptions about product or service. The outcome of strong brand equity is the recommendations to other people, and then the customers will buy more from you. Also, now the customers are more loyal and less likely will be lost to competitors (Shimp, 2010, 36–38).

In comparison, Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster (2008, 125–126) emphasize emotional connections in *building brand equity* with the key stakeholders, which include aligning the brand promise with the actual brand experience and strength of encouragement with all the key stakeholders.

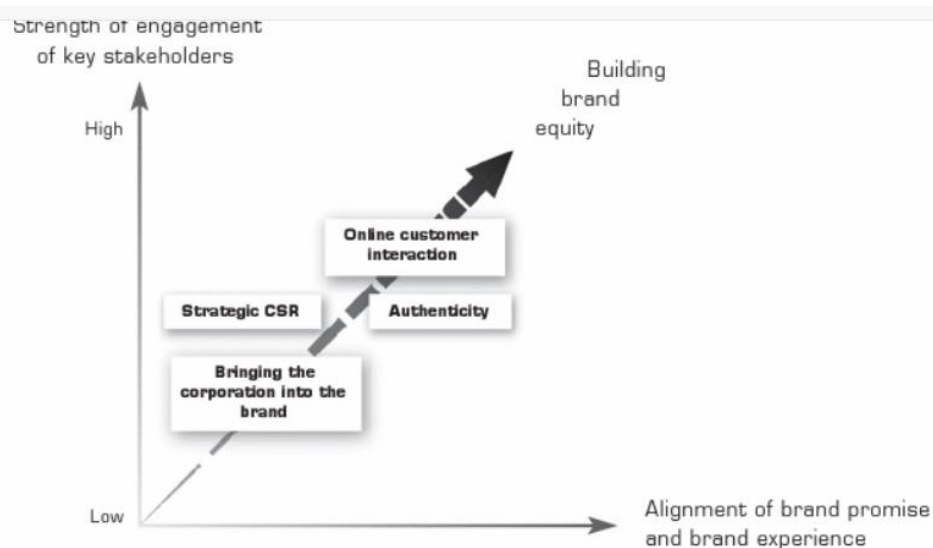


Figure 3: Building brand equity in the connective branding framework (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster 2008, 125)

They also argue, that identification and elimination of misalignment between such elements that define the brand and deliver the brand, the brand itself becomes more trustworthy, authentic or credible. The elements that define the

brand e.g. brand principles, brand vision or brand architecture is therefore eliminated likewise delivering elements like brand metrics, enabling processes or actual employee behavior is also identified, but eliminated.

The authors here may refer, to find the very pure brand without any disturbing elements and to start from a clear table, is to cut former habits and meters.

Referring to the authors, meaningful ways to engage employees, customers and other stakeholders is to find continuously appealing dialogue. This could lead to building emotional connections with all the key stakeholders and again satisfy their heightened need for information likewise creates transparency.

In this connective branding framework, the brand is organized around four brand levers. These are brand strategy, brand building and management, stakeholder engagement and enabling processes and structures.

2.2 Brand recognition and recall

In figure 4 below is next presented another model related to brand awareness, a Customer-based brand equity (CBBE)-model.

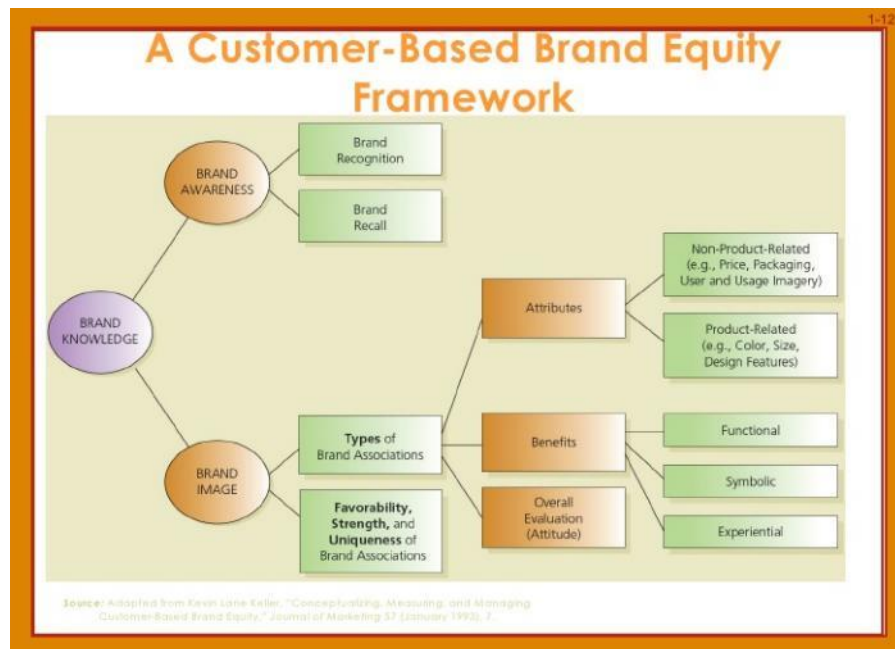


Figure 4: A customer-based Brand Equity Framework (LinkedIn, Slideshare.net)

In this model brand knowledge is consisting of a brand node in people's memory in which variety of associations are linked to. According to this Keller's Customer-based brand equity (CBBE)-model can be noticed, how the relevant dimensions affecting customer's response are the awareness of the brand, related terms of brand recall and recognition likewise favorability, strength and uniqueness of brand associations created in people's memory.

The brand recall is a deeper form and the brand recognition more superficial level of awareness. With hints or cues provided, customers can identify a brand - this is recalling, which marketers aspire.

For example, if a person is requested to name a luxury automobile, most would say Mercedes-Benz, or in the sports industry, athletic footwear could bring into mind of many people, for example, Nike or Reebok. A marcom imperative is to move brands to top-of-mind awareness (TOMA) from a state of unawareness. This status exists if the company brand is the very first brand that the one(s) recall, when they think about brands in certain product categories.

Two properties to determine brand awareness level are depth and breadth. These are relevant, because it helps to understand constituency behavior towards a corporate brand (Keller 1998 cited in Ormeno 2007, 88). The depth of brand awareness refers to a likelihood, how easily and likely the brand elements will come to mind. Also, this depth depends on brand visibility which is on the other hand affected by the branding strategy of the company. In turn, breadth of brand awareness refers to the situations, when the corporate brand is coming to mind. Secondly, the earlier mentioned 'equity' of a corporate brand depend on these both properties of depth and breadth. But, how to measure brand awareness?

Churchill and Iacobucci, (2002 cited in Ormeno 2007, 75) continue, how the primary data of brand awareness could be measured, based on communication, particularly on questionnaires. There are several measures of awareness to assess the depth of corporate brand recognition, and it can be direct or indirect. In direct measures, the constituencies can be shown single items or perceptually degraded versions of them and simply ask whether they had seen or

heard of them previously or not. In turn, in indirect approach eye tracking techniques can be utilized or the effectiveness can be tested on pupillometric or other equipment. For example, alternative package designs could be tested this way. (see more Churchill and Iacobucci 2002, 306.)

2.3 Brand Asset Valuator (BAV) -model of brand equity

Referring to the figure 5, Young & Rubicam (Y&R) is a major global advertising agency, that has measured brand equity for 450 global brands likewise over 8000 local brands in twenty-four countries. Aaker (2002) in the earlier studies present BrandAsset® Valuator (BAV) model of brand equity created by Y&R. The evaluation includes four sets of measures. These are differentiation, relevance, esteem and knowledge.

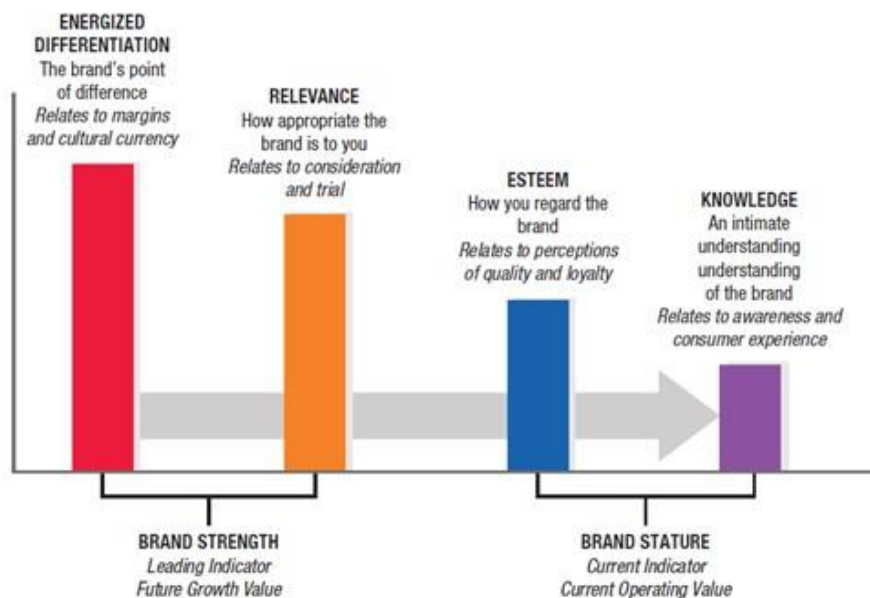


Figure 5: The Young & Rubicam Model of Brand Dynamics (Phillips, F. based on Aaker, 2002)

The energized differentiation is the first one mentioned in Y&R model. It is important, because if point of difference does not exist, a brand's value is not high. Differentiation measures the distinctiveness of a brand in the marketplace. *Relevance* is the next dimension in this model. To reach a large customer base, a brand should be relevant to a significant segment. For example, well-known brand Kodak has high relevance and market penetration unlike competitors Agfa and Fuji. Another example could be Ferrari and Jaguar, which are very high in differentiation, but significantly low in relevance. In

other words, very few people would consider buying these luxury labels be caused by the impracticality for daily use. Brand strength is created by both dimensions and the brand of Disney is one of the few, that seems to be high on brand strength.

Third dimension of this model *Esteem* is very much based on perceived quality. Comparatively, there are exceptions like Japan in which perceived quality is less greater variability in esteem, than perceived popularity. In turn, the last dimension of *knowledge*, is not only awareness of a brand, but understanding what the brand stands for. It is generated by a real customer intimacy towards the brand unlike awareness, which is only built by exposures. Together, esteem and knowledge create brand stature construct (Aaker 2002, 306–307).

3 BRAND IMAGE

The brand image of an organization represents the current and immediate reflection, which the stakeholders have of the organization itself. The concept of image is appropriate to the conceptions of stakeholders in the organization as it embodies topical opinions (Bick et al. 2003; Balmer 1998; Gray and Balmer 1998 cited in Abratt& Kleyn 2012, 1055). The brand image is also associated with the different physical and behavioral attributes of the organization. Such features include, for example, the name of the company, the range of products and services, the ideology, and the quality tips provided by the organization's products, services and people (Nguyen and Leblanc 2001 cited in Abratt& Kleyn 2012, 1055.)

However, a sufficient level of brand awareness must be first created, before marketers can put more emphasis on crafting a brand image. To create a positive brand image, a company should use marketing programs to link strong, favourable and unique associations towards a brand in people's memory. These brand associations can be brand attributes, which may be descriptive features to characterize a product or service. In addition, they can be brand benefits that contain personal value and meaning, which can be attached to the product or service attributes. However, the beliefs about the brand attributes and benefits are formed differently. For example, brand associations can be formed from direct experience, on online surfing, on consumers reports, from

word of mouth or simply by assumptions about the brand itself like name, logo, country, place or event etc. Consequently, communication strategies should consider the influence of these sources of information. This could happen by well managing them likewise adequately accounting for them in design work of the communication strategies.

In conclusion, to create a customer-based brand equity based on a differential response, marketers should focus on strongly held brand associations that are both favourable and unique and not shared with competing brands. Uniqueness is helping one's consumers or customers to choose the brand. However, marketers should also analyse very carefully the customers-base as well as competition to determine the best positioning to one's brand (Keller 2013, 76–77).

Uniqueness could be related to personality. Rossolatos (2012, 27) mentions brand congruence hypothesis, which is created, when the brand personality correspondence with the consumer's or brand users' personality. (Cf. also earlier studies of Birdwell 1968; Parker 2009; Solomon et al. 2006; Sirgy 1982) If the metaphor of the brand is used as personality, sometimes, manifest through a celebrity in brand advertisements may customers' find it easier to appreciate the emotional values of the brand. (De Chernatony 2006, cited in Rossolatos 2012).

3.1 Brand positioning

Brand positioning means to find a proper location in the minds of people. This could refer to the minds of a group, of consumers or market segment. If the brand positioning is successful, it helps to guide marketing strategy and to maximize potential benefit to the company. It helps to clarify what brand is about, how it is unique, or similar with other competitive brands as well as identifies why the consumers should purchase and use it. Positioning also means to identify the target market and the nature of competition likewise optimal points-of-parity and -difference of brand associations. In other words, market people must know who the target consumer is, how the brand is similar and different compared the competitors (Keller 2013, 79).

Srivastava et Metz (2016, 4–6) clarify this, and state how points-of-parity (POPs) is not just points-of-equality, but an adequate number of consumers believing that the brand is good enough on attributes and benefits. In other words, brand associations are not that unique to the brand, but may contain same elements as competitors and shared by other similar brands. Thus, points-of-difference (PODs) are attributes or benefits that can be related to and cannot be found among competitors. However, these both are important and should be used in brand positioning that there is both rational and emotional components.

3.2 Brand mantras

In the previous research brand mantra has been brought up for example by Keller (1999). Again, Srivastava & Metz's (2016) research emphasizes its importance and compares brand mantra into "brand essence" or "core brand promise". These mantras are short but captive and very powerful devices. What a brand mantra should do, is to summarize the crucial and salient considerations of a brand. Nike, is one example of a brand, that economically communicates what their brand is. The brand mantra of *authentic athletic performance* also presents the brand values conveyed by its brand mantra. However, the difference to brand slogan is, that brand mantras are intended with internal purposes only and slogans, such as "*Just do It*" slogan of Nike, only for external use. The three key components for a successful brand mantra are;

- Communication - A good brand mantra defines the business categories, uniqueness and boundaries
- Keeping things simple – Be memorable, vivid, short and crisp
- Inspire people – A brand mantra is effective, when it stands out and is meaningful and relevant to all the employees of a company

3.3 Brand loyalty

The concept of brand loyalty is strategically important to companies to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage. There are plenty of reasons why it is so, and next is listed five of them. The first is, that those brand-loyal consumers

are less expensive, because they reduce the marketing costs in business. Secondly, a brand that exhibits high quality is less risky for brand extension. Thirdly, it has been shown, how brand loyalty affects and associates with higher rates of return on investment through increases in market share. Fourth point of view is, that brand-loyal consumers less likely search for alternatives thus reducing probability to switch to another brand. Furthermore, brand loyalty has also been a major determinant of brand equity. (Gounaris& Stathakopoulos, 2004 283.)

Brand loyalty is a very complex construct; however, it can be defined as a repeat purchase, preference and commitment or retention and allegiance. In addition, there exists several aspects in behavioural or attitudinal brand loyalty. Brand trust is also related to the customer behaviours, also before as well as after one's purchase and it can cause long term loyalty likewise could strengthen the relation between these two (Liu et al 2011).

Brand loyalty has been on discussion for at least the last three decades in the marketing literature. It has argued to relate to brand equity process and leading to certain marketing advantages like marketing costs, making more new customers and trade leverage.

3.3.1 Brand experience

When the organizations want to build stakeholder loyalty they need to consider the experiences there exist among them, while interacting with the brand. There are many brand-related stimuli for which the customers are susceptible to the brand. These include brand recognition features, shapes, fonts, background design elements, slogans, packaging, marketing communications and the environment where the brand is sold. (Brakus et al. 2009 cited in Abratt& Kleyn 2012) These all are also linked with four dimensions of the brand image, which are next presented.

Sensory experiences occur when visual or other senses are used to perceive brand-related stimuli. Second is *behavioral experiences* which involve physical actions as well as behaviors that occur when consumers (or customers) associate with consumption of the brand. Third is *intellectual experiences* that

are result of the consumer (or customer) being curious. This also encourages cognitive reflection while experiencing the brand (Abratt& Kleyn 2012).

These brand experiences deepen the association with a brand, because such experiences strengthen memory traces. Lack of brand experiences may lead to a weak brand and the customers are not able to build a strong brand in their minds.

3.3.2 Brand Halo

To have a major influence on the perception of your customers, a Brand Halo™ can help you. It includes logos, mission, slogans etc., but the purpose may remain empty if these are used in isolation. Again, if your Brand Halo™ fits right around your company and displays the best possible light of what your company can offer, you will have a strong brand. (Hammond 2008, 19). A brand halo is built on four components, which are Emotions, Perception, Innovation and Communication. This is easy to remember if one uses the mnemonic of EPIC. Hammond (2008 20–21) presents each of them.

First, the author is emphasizing *emotion*, which is the key part of creating a powerful brand and all the rest next listed is built on this. If the emotion is missing you simply have a commodity and not a brand. Further, emotions are influenced by *sensory stimulation*. This happens through five senses at the brain, which are sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. A strong perception of the brand in the minds of a customer is reached through all the senses rather than just one, like the ‘sight’ sense. However, even these five senses are important to recognize, it is not enough. In the Innovation-part Brand Halo® could be compared to a guiding light, where the employees will be guided with the Brand Halo manual of important processes, systems and procedures to monitor and improve each customer Brand Reflection. The brand is then alive with the innovation and longevity is achieved. Also, innovation provides freshness to keep one’s brand ‘top of mind’ in terms of purchasing decision.

The last of the four parts of Brand Halo core components is communication. To describe one’s purpose, Brand Storybook helps in creating an emotional brand. Using narratives to describe your business, aims and achievements, a

company can communicate emotional messages to the customers likewise to the employees. The whole customer experience is then underpinned this way with the help of Brand Storybook.

People, society and cultural biases change, and brands are not static. This means one's brand has continually to be polished. With the help of Brand Halo® a company can build a brand of EPIC proportions.

Referring to the Figure 6, a better communications plan can be created, if strategic objectives and audiences is utilized.

Epic moments.

Once we have the Brand Story, we can build a better communications plan driven by strategic objectives and audiences. Here is a framework that shows the opportunities.

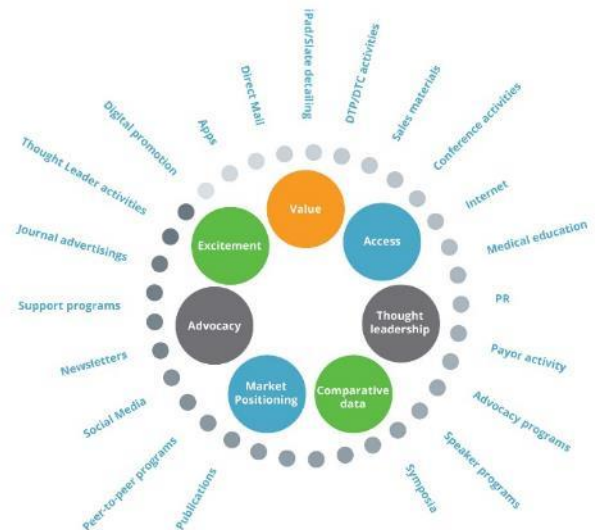


Figure 5: Epic moments (Epic Brand Group, 2017)

Brand Story should be the guiding force for developing each initiative, program, and tactical content within the company on how to communicate with its various stakeholders. It should guide the details of each sales representative or interact with customers. Brand Story should be included in sales training and sales projects for example through a unified campaign to engage the customers in the right moments with the Brand Story (Epic Brand Group 2017).

3.3.3 Your Brand Storybook™

With no doubt, stories are the oldest form of influence in our human history. We are connected to experience the world through the stories or meaningful narrative. Further, experiences shared through stories accumulated

knowledge is shared, emotionally, likewise wisdom, beliefs and values. Even though technological advances provide limitless achievements, still stories are valued and is a basic need of everyone and keeps one motivated, excited and inspired (Hammond, 2008 217–218).

Hammond (2008, 19) continues, how customers nowadays seek for meaningful dialogue with suppliers or conversation with businesses rich in symbols, metaphors, meanings and experiences. Powerful brand can hence be created if such communication is offered to one's customers. Respectively, Bill Dauphinais, who is a global leader of brand marketing and communications, continues, how brands are built around stories and identify who one is, or is coming from. Thus, the most effective stories are born and bring brands alive.

Brand values should also meet with customers through captivating stories to develop meaningful business relationships, in line with one's credos, stance and worldview. These customers who are similar to one's values, beliefs, ideas etc. are usually already naturally bonded to the brand, but also efforts should be concentrated on these customers (Hammond, 2008, 220.) If a company decides to create their own Brand Storybook®, more details can be found for example in Hammond (2008 from the page 223)

4 LAATUKESKUS, EXCELLENCE FINLAND

The commissioner of the thesis is Finnish Quality Association and its 100% owned daughter company Laatukeskus Excellence Finland. In this study, we will use the brand name Excellence Finland as “an umbrella” to comprise both Finnish Quality Association and Laatukeskus Excellence Finland Oy.

The FQA operates in Espoo and Laatukeskus Excellence Finland supports the operations by specializing in training and consultancy services. The FQA is an ideological non-profit making association promoting quality management, quality control, improving the business sector, public administration policy, quality of products and the competitiveness. Currently it has over 500 Finnish members namely private- and public-sector organizations and thousands of business developers and opinion leaders are actively participating in the activities of the corporation.

There are three different kind of membership options; key corporate members, supporting corporate members (companies and public-sector organizations) and individual members. The policy guidelines are constituted by the Advisory Board comprising senior managers from the key corporate members. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to establish for each strategy period the national agenda for quality.

Laatukeskus Excellence Finland also has national cooperation with partners, which are considerable number of organizations actively promoting resistant competitiveness in Finland. One significant partner is Finland's Ministry of Employment and the Economy. International cooperation and networking with several Quality Organizations around the world promotes Finland in quality manners and develops and maintains the worldwide quality trends (Laatukeskus 2015).

As mentioned, Laatukeskus Excellence Finland Ltd is owned by its subsidiary called Finnish Quality Association, registered association (Suomen Laatuyhdistys ry). The organization consists of three sections, which are Advisory Board, Board of Directors and Personnel. The operations of the Finnish Quality Association are directed by the Advisory Board, which is a group of top executives of decision-making community members. The eighth-member Board of Directors manage the operations of the association and the company owned by it. In addition, three people work in the management team and there are altogether 15 full-time employees. The auditor company is KPMG and the financial management of the company is controlled by Rantalainen Ltd (Laatukeskus 2017).

5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the empirical study was to explore the current brand image of Excellence Finland from the point of view of their stakeholders and potential customers. There were three different customer levels; current and potential customers, and international partners. The purpose was to know, how the current brand image should be improved. The meaning was also to find out characteristics and differences between these target groups' replies and which is

the current brand awareness level of the company, especially among potential customers.

The conclusive research is based on sampling issues, and not the whole customer-base of the case company is utilized in this study. To meet the requirements of this conclusive research and to achieve the overall picture of the current state of brand image and brand awareness among the customers, a quantitative approach was chosen. However, qualitative elements are also included. The data collection was with an online questionnaire conducted in cooperation with Excellence Finland and some guidance with their advertising agency. The questionnaire was in three different forms, tailored to each target group.

In the next chapter it is presented, how research methods are usually divided into quantitative or qualitative methods. However, in some cases, these both can be used to get a larger picture of the results. Also, alternative methods can be utilized. But, the choice of a right method is selected based on the research basis. For example, research question(s) determine the research method (Newby 2010, 65).

5.1 Quantitative and qualitative research

In the earlier studies of the literature, research methods refer to a systematic, focused collection of data gathered orderly. The purpose of the most suitable method for one research project, is to solve or answer to a research problem, and should be concerning the question, how to do things. Most commonly in business studies, normal techniques are structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews, surveys or observations (Bennet 1986; Jankowicz 1991 cited in Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005).

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research is the procedure rather than quality. Basically, in quantitative research findings are statistical and the quantitative research utilizes measurement. In comparison, qualitative research does not really measure things. However, the difference is not only in quantification, but in addition in reflection of different perspectives on knowledge as well as in research objectives. To analyse these methods more deeply, the following figure 7 illustrates the main differences.

THE DIFFERENCE IN EMPHASIS IN QUALITATIVE VERSUS QUANTITATIVE METHODS (1)

QUALITATIVE METHODS	QUANTITATIVE METHODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on understanding Focus on understanding from respondent's point of view ◊ Interpretation and rational approach ◊ Observations and measurements in natural settings ◊ Subjective "insider view" and closeness to data ◊ Explorative orientation ◊ Process oriented ◊ Holistic perspective ◊ Generalization by comparison of properties and contexts of individual organism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◊ Emphasis on testing and verification ◊ Focus on facts or reasons for social events ◊ Logical and critical approach ◊ Controlled measurement ◊ Objective "outsider view" distant from data ◊ Hypothetical-deductive; focus on hypothesis/theory testing ◊ Result oriented ◊ Particularistic and analytical ◊ Generalization by population membership

Figure 6: Qualitative versus Quantitative methods (Reichardt and Cook 1979)

In this picture, it can be noticed that the quantitative methods are based on testing, facts, logical and critical approach and controlled measurement. In comparison, the emphasis and focus of qualitative methods is understanding the respondents' or informants' point of view and the approach is based on both, interpretation and rational way. Also, in qualitative research the skills and experience play more important roles in the analysis process, than in quantitative research, which is more logical and critical. In other words, qualitative methods are more rational, explorative and intuitive, and in comparison, quantitative methods focus more on hypothesis testing, and results likewise the objective is more an "outsider view" rather than an "insider view".

As a summary, qualitative methods need more abstract thinking, critical analysing, avoiding and recognizing biases and obtaining valid and reliable information. The analytical distance is also important likewise theoretical and social skill of sensitivity utilizing past experiences, not forgetting clever sense of observation and interaction. (van Maanen 1983; Strauss and Corbin 1990 cited in Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).

It is also possible to use both methods, in other words to quantify qualitative data. For example, researchers can collect the data through observations and interviews, which are methods usually related to the qualitative research. On

the other hand, the data collection can allow additionally statistical analysis. To choose the right method, one should consider, which method you want to emphasize and what are the objectives of the research. Additionally, the overall form determines the right methods to use in this research.

5.2 Reliability and validity

There are earlier studies of the validity and reliability in the literature which clearly show, how the validity of the results is concerned with whether they are in relation as they appear to be. In turn, reliability can be examined as internal and external reliability, and shows how precise the results really are. (Saunders et al. 2003 101.)

In addition, Heikkilä (2001) determines how internal reliability is ensured by measuring the statistical unit several times, so the result should be the same each time for reliable measurement. External reliability, in turn, means repeatability, meaning measurements can be repeated in different studies and situations. Also, reliable study requires same results like in the earlier original study. Assimilating these two validity and reliability, low reliability reduces validity, however reliability depends on the validity of the study.

The more recent studies reveal, how research measurements do not present the actual and very true value of the characteristic of interest, and instead are just observations of it. Again, a variety of factor can cause even measurement errors which can be systematic errors or random errors. Systematic error refers to solid factors. These solid factors affect the observed score for each measurement in the same way. The random error, on the other hand, is due to factors that can change every time the measurements are made. (Malhotra & Birks 2006.)

If we consider questionnaires, the validity assesses to what extent the scale or set of measures precisely represents the concept of interest. (Hair et al., 2006, 137.) In this study, to guarantee external validity, a representative sample was collected. Although, this sampling frame of the study was limited to the customers of Excellence Finland, who were willing to participate. The sampling share of the customers was taken, because to represent all the Excellence

Finland customers would not have been purposeful. This was the case, because the time constraints and resources were limited.

The total sample size of 158 from 2618 recipients (or 938 different organizations) was considered good representative of the Excellence Finland's customer base, including the potential customers. However, the results should not be generalized, because not all the customers are presented in this study. Content validity refers to whether the test adequately domain or dimension that has been measured and is particularly relevant to performance or achievement tests (Domino 2006). To grow content validity in this study, a comprehensive theoretical framework was added to get an overall comprehension of the thesis subject and domain of brand image, brand awareness and related terms. Validity was also ensured by pre-testing the questionnaire, in order to detect irregularities and inconsistencies, or change the layout or the order of the questions. All questions were based on a carefully considered context with the theme, as well as careful gloss and formulation of questions to ensure that the respondents were able to understand them. The final questionnaire was tailored to each target group in context to reveal inner thoughts related to the company image and awareness. Brand recognition and -image questions were put first and more sales-oriented questions to the end. This ensured the focus on issues was in the brand.

The possible cause of concern for reliability is due to the way the study is conducted. In an Internet survey, it is impossible to check that all population groups have uniform answers or that each respondent answered the questionnaire only once.

Another risk in the Internet survey is that the respondent fills in the questionnaire in a hurry, which may affect the accuracy or whether the answers are not sent back to the sender. Also, the Internet survey does not allow the clarification of questions, like for example in telephone interviews.

Again, the sampling error was minimized in choosing and targeting a substantial sample size of over 2600 of the whole customer base, however potential customers are not yet customers, so 286 replies can be left over of the amounts of recipients. However, the sampling frame was limited, for example

same questionnaire was sent to the same organization to several employees and the potential customers' email address list was gathered quite randomly and might distort the results. In turn, it was encouraging how replies were received in each target group, even though international partners were not that relevant to the research. Response errors occur, if respondents are giving inaccurate replies or the question is misleading or indistinct. However, the overall validity and reliability of the study were considered adequate after the assessment of individual methods for data collection and analysis.

5.3 Data collection methods

Quinlan (2011, 322) advises that questionnaires and scales are structured instruments to gather data and widely used in survey research. Primarily these are used in quantitative research in generating numerical data, but the author admits that qualitative data could also be generated by questionnaires, as open questions. Figure 7 below shows the data collection methods of this study.

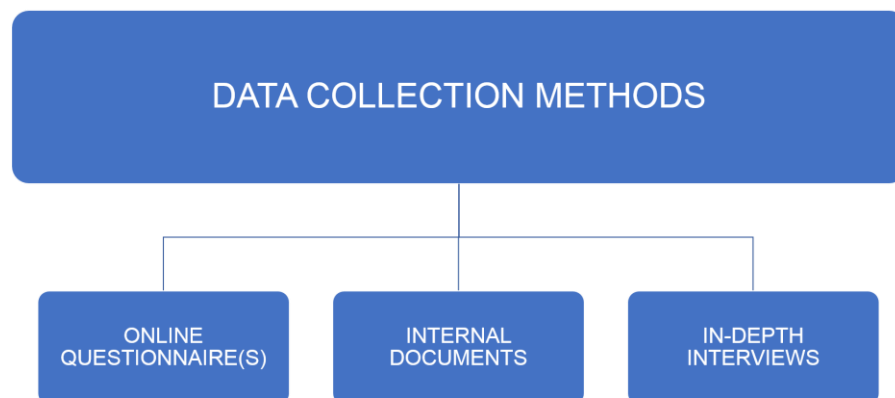


Figure 8: Data collection methods (Quinlan 2011)

A survey research methodology is recommended and effective in large or geographically spread populations. Surveys also attend to be quantitative research projects with some qualitative elements, like in this study. Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) also support this, and add, that in most *structured* questionnaires (survey or an interview), the questions likewise the answers are predetermined. The recipients will pick up one of the pre-stated answers, such as multiple-choice manner. The difference into *unstructured* questionnaire (or in-

interviews) is, that there are no predetermined answers, or they are roughly predetermined. This means, there is possibility to answer in his or her own words. A questionnaire, which allows the recipient to use their own words and the answers are predetermined is called a *semi-structured* questionnaire, used in surveys or interviews (Churchill 1999 cited in Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005).

In this study, the data collection method to collect primary data was chosen to be both *structured*, and *semi-structured* online questionnaire as there we also open questions. According to Philips (1966 cited in Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005 124) this kind of combination is recommended. If the survey is using only structured method, there is no room for the respondents to give their own views or ideas, which could be very useful in the results analysing phase and to develop things in the future. In comparison, if the unstructured method is used alone, the accurate testing of the hypotheses might be difficult or impossible.

The questionnaire in this study was conducted both in Finnish and English language, since the stakeholders of the company are both national, and international. The research method was selected quantitative with some qualitative elements, like earlier mentioned. The questionnaire was chosen to be an online questionnaire, which can be easily emailed even for a geographically scattered population and the use of Internet in survey research is very common (Quinlan 2011, 182, 322, 325).

The secondary data was collected with in-depth interviews and internal documents. Quinlan (2011, 244) agrees, how documents and printed materials and archives are the primary sources to collect secondary data. However, in-depth interviews are also a useful data collection technique. This mainly qualitative technique can be used to various purposes such as needs assessment, program refinement, issue identification or strategic planning. These in-depth interviews are appropriate if one wants to ask open-ended questions to arouse deeper information from relatively few people. (Guion, Diehl, and McDonald 2006 & 2011) This method was selected to collect information and to determine the background information, why this survey is implemented in the first place and which are the purposes and goals of this survey etc.

5.4 Data analysis

Like already mentioned, there are three data collection methods in this study. These are online questionnaires, internal documents and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data and qualitative data comprise the empirical evidence in this thesis. The three online questionnaires are each tailored to all target groups and are also to analyze data and not only to gather it. The questionnaires are both quantitative and qualitative, because there were open questions included. In-depth interviews generate qualitative data, and online questionnaires generate quantitative data with qualitative elements in this study.

However, quantitative data is also called numerical data. Quantitative data in the analysis is using statistical methods. This is exploited in this study mainly in pie charts, column diagram and tables. These figures are automatically created from Survey Pal Excel sheets, but modified afterwards into appropriate form, and open-ended questions are presented in tables (Quinlan 2011, 380). Open-ended questions are analyzed in table-forms and they help to see the insight thoughts and creative ideas of the respondents. Quinlan (2011, 352& 420) presents four stages in qualitative data analysis. First is to describe data and next is to interpret this data. Thirdly, the data should be summarized and make conclusions. Finally, the fourth stage is to find out correlation between literature review and the data to discover, whether they replenish each other or not.

The secondary data was collected with in-depth interviews, meaning that the conversation has been implemented in Finnish and freely and not so structured like in the semi-structured interview. The main interview questions, in the first meetings were the following;

1. What is the field of business of Excellence Finland
2. Are there going to be different questions to the different target groups?
3. Will the questionnaire be conducted both in Finnish and English?
4. How will the results of the questionnaires be gathered or directed to respondents?
5. What is the expected time schedule of this study?
6. What are the main reasons to do this study?

7. Which are the roles of each one involved in this project?
8. Is there going to be any reward or gift to the respondents of this questionnaire?

It was obvious since the first meeting, that this kind of brand image survey was planned for several years within the company, but was never implemented. The importance of this kind of study to discover the opinions and development points of view from the customers, members and potential customer was experienced very vital to the company and they were very eager to cooperate with this project.

As mentioned above, qualitative data collected from open-ended questions and in-depth interviews are used in analysis. Like according to these four stages, specific data analysis is presented in chapter 6. Qualitative data analysis from in-depth interviews is focused on the in-depth questions presented more deeply in the next chapter.

6 SURVEY RESULTS

Like earlier mentioned, the secondary data of this study was gathered with in-depth interviews and internal documents. The interviewees in this research were the Quality Manager, the Training Manager and the CEO of the case company and the interviews were implemented personally or in pairs. These meetings and in-depth interviews provided the opportunity to involve people to this project better. Roles of each one involving this project were agreed beforehand, and this worked until the very end. In practice, one main contact person, the Training Manager within the company was named. This was in case, if any problems arise during the study or help was needed.

The selection of the respondents and the test sending likewise the ready-made questionnaires through the Survey Pal-program was decided to realize by one person as well, the Quality Manager. In other words, the author did not select the organizations or respondents, to whom the questionnaires were to be sent nor did send them.

Also, the Communications office, which the company currently cooperates with, was involved in this project to comment and advise the author of this thesis in layout and order of the questionnaire questions. Also, all the personnel had an opportunity to read the online questionnaire questions before sending and comment freely. At the very end of the project, all the persons involved in this project and personnel as well, were offered to comment for the final report, which was printed in the company office.

The first question of the in-depth interview concerned the activities or business area of the company, which appeared to be to develop oneself likewise develop others towards excellence in quality matters. This happens with seminars, courses, trainings, evaluation- and expert services and through competitions such as Finnish Quality Award and Quality Innovation of the year competition.

Then, about the questionnaire, the questions were agreed to be different between the three target groups, but some of the questions were to be similar. Each question was tailored, by the author, to discover the most important matters related to the cooperation. These results of the questionnaire are presented in the next chapter. The most interesting group from the view point of the Excellence Finland was potential customers, and the company seems to be eager to get new members.

Next, as earlier mentioned, the language of the questionnaire was agreed to be Finnish, but for the international partners English. Later it was discovered, how this complicated the analysis of the results a lot, because all the data had to be translated into English. However, this was known beforehand, although the open-ended questions revealed to be the most challenging ones in this whole study.

Next it was decided, how to deliver the data to the selected target groups. The online questionnaire was decided together to be distributed through an email, which is a cost-effective way to reach all the selected respondents. The other option could have been to post traditionally the questionnaire with the cover letter, but it must have been very expensive because of the postal fees. The

anonymity regarding the respondents was also possible to fulfil, when the online questionnaire was chosen to be the data gathering method.

The online questionnaire about the brand image of Excellence Finland, was now sent to three target groups through Survey Pal software tool. However, before the sending, the questionnaires were slightly modified, with the perspective from the company's partner of communications office. The changes applied the order of the questions, and the brand recognition questions were brought up first. The next brand image related questions and the last sales-oriented questions remained the same. This modified structure made the primary stress now more on brand rather than in sales. In addition, a few questions were added, in agreement, to be easier to compare the results in the future, for example, if the questionnaire will be sent again one or two years later.

The rewarding was mentioned in the cover letter, which was one ticket to the international Quality congress 2016 for the 2nd day, where the main orators were to be Edward Snowden and Robert Tercek. In addition, 5 pieces of books were raffled between the respondents. However, this rewarding was not mentioned in the cover letter of the international partners, which probably affected the low answering percentage of them.

Like earlier mentioned, in total, 938 organizations received the survey link through an email in April 2016. This gives acceptable answer percentage of 16,84%, in total. This percentage could have been a bit higher, but it was to be expected on behalf of the commissioner. This result was also expected, because it was the very first time, when this kind of online questionnaire was sent to the stakeholders of the company. However, if we put all the three target groups to be analyzed separately, the results show, that the potential customers reply was 31 replies out of 198 organizations. This means, the potential customers' answering rate was quite good, with 15,66%. This is quite an average percentage on online questionnaires and is rather good in that perspective.

The other questionnaire in Finnish, was sent to 674 organizations of current customers and members, and 121 replies were received. This makes 17,95%

in percentages. This is the highest percentage share of all the target groups, and it is as well expected.

Finally, the 66 international partner organizations received the questionnaire and 6 replies were received, after a reminder email. This gives the answer percentage of 9,09%. This is a very low result, but was also, however, expected. The main reasons for the low percentage on international partners' replies may be, that the cover letter with the survey link went to spam mail or Outlook subscribed the email unnecessary.

At first, the schedule for the planning part was set until the end of the year 2015, and this schedule realized. The online questionnaire was sent as planned at the end of April 2016 and the answering time was 2 weeks. Also, reminder emails and cover letters were sent. Before the sending, the questions were brainstormed and revised a few times, before the final versions were ready to be sent to the target groups. The questions can be found on Appendices 4–6. More in detail, the Finnish online questionnaires (two) to the current and potential customers and members, were sent on 27th of April 2016, and the answering time was until 9th of May 2016. The English version to the international partners was sent a day after, and the answering time was until 10th of May 2016.

Finally, the replies arrived in time and the survey pal online hosting service automatically calculated the percentages of the answers with Excel. The automatic Excel-figures appeared to be the best to use in this study, because they are accurate. However, all the Excel-figures had to be translated into English and most of the chart types were changed to show different kind of charts.

6.1 Current customers

The respondents of the online questionnaire were asked, for example, to evaluate, how well they know Excellence Finland, their opinion of the media visibility, and how they were introduced to the company or which services they had used so far. The questions were tailored to each group, but some questions were similar. Open questions were also included, like how to develop the company image. Particularly, the potential customers were asked, if they develop

their processes or about their current operational development tools. Also, experiences were asked to reveal their emotions or feelings. Additionally, the questions regarding the future buying decisions of the company services were asked.

The overall results are presented in figures, to make a general picture of the answer percentages and differences of the company awareness, first among current customers. The closer analysis is provided in open ended questions by content filtering and answering variables to find tendency in the results and survey findings. In the next chapters the questions of each target group will be presented and analysed separately.

The questionnaire was sent to 674 key current member organizations and 121 replies were received. Only the main results are published in this study, and the number of organizations, 674. This method of calculation gives approximately answering percentage rate 17,95% to this group only. This means, that 72% of the replies, meaning 674 organizations of the total of 938 organizations, was from this target group. Most of the respondents were men, but the difference to women was not quite much. There were 14 more replies came from men than from women, meaning 58,8% men and 44,2% female. Since the main target group was Senior or Middle Management, the most respondents were around in their fifties, 45-54 years of age. However, the age was distributed quite extensively, which is a good sign.

The second highest was 55-64-year-old group of the respondents, meaning 34 persons and 28,1%. Thirdly, respondents of 35 to 44 years old were 23,1% of the total, meaning 28 people in this target group. The rest age group of 65+ was 6,6% and under 34 years, 5% and 2,5% something else.

The following figure 9 begins the questionnaire and first asks to estimate the knowing of the case company among the current customers.



Figure 9: How well respondents estimate their knowing of Excellence Finland_current All (n=121)

The first question of the survey asked the respondents to evaluate, how well they know Excellence Finland. This question was to find out to what extent the respondents know about Excellence Finland, and its related to the Keller (2013) in *brand awareness*. The results show that in total the overall recognisability of the company is not at the expected level, because only 5,9% of the respondents thought they know Excellence Finland very well. However, 38,1% thought they know the company quite well and again 28% to some extent and 24,6% well. Finally, 3,4% evaluated they know it poorly and 2,5% did not answer at all to this question. So, Excellence Finland is known quite well, but there is certainly room for development. In addition, some of the respondents perhaps did not know what to answer.

Later the respondents were asked in an open-ended question how to develop the brand image and the most answers were related to more visible, international, modern and fresh brand image, (Table 4). However, despite the poor result in the *very well* -sector, the case company's services were in comparison quite well known, like seminars, LaatuLehti-magazine likewise courses and coaching.

In the Table 1 below additional question was to discover, how the respondents would describe the general image of the case company.

Table 1: How to describe image of Excellence Finland, three optional adjectives (n=112)
(P=Positive, N=Negative, ne=Neutral, na=No answer)

Description, free of choice adjectives	Number of mentions	Percentage
Reliable, businesslike, firm, stable, well-established, permanent	36 (P)	11,4 %
Expert, professional	28 (P)	8,8 %
High quality, quality-conscious, quality-oriented	25 (P)	7,9 %
Renewable, reform capable, developmental, educational, advanced	19 (P)	6,0 %
Fast, innovative, energetic, sales-inspiring, inspirational, dynamic	16 (P)	5,0 %
An up-to-date, pioneering, influential, promoting, modern company	16 (P)	5,0 %
Old-fashioned, stiff, stuck, slow, Laatukskus as a word sounds a bit oldish and stiff	16 (N)	5,0 %
Boring, unsurprising, bland, dilute, unobtrusive, passive, tasteless, colorless	14 (N)	4,4 %
Unknown (to large groups), no image, invisible, unrealistic, partly looking for themselves	13 (N)	4,1 %
Engineer-, and agency-like, technical, theoretical, conservative, formal, docile, static	13 (ne)	4,1 %
The elegant, clear, systematic, conscious	12 (P)	3,8 %
Closed, narrowly focused, self-sufficient, distant, inwardly warm up, insulating, tame	12 (N)	3,8 %
Enthusiastic, active, for the benefit of Finland, businesses' help, supportive, positive, informative	12 (P)	3,8 %
Known, respected, well known, recognized, reputable	11 (P)	3,5 %
Conversational, customer-oriented, human, informative, easily approachable, friendly	10 (P)	3,2 %
No answer	9 (na)	2,8 %
Indeterminate, no position on issues, (non-profit), indistinct, no clear role	8 (N)	2,5 %
Expensive	7 (N)	2,2 %
Neutral, calm, good, basic education, into processes, the overall quality development	7 (ne)	2,2 %
Versatile, wide-ranging, networking, cooperative	6 (P)	1,9 %
Traditional, domestic, blue, blue and white	6 (ne)	1,9 %
Seriously taken, profound, honest, exemplary	4 (P)	1,3 %
Internationalizing, international	4 (P)	1,3 %
Interesting, promising, speaks on behalf of the quality of education!	4 (P)	1,3 %

Small, small that tries to be great, in "tribes", before was bureaucratic, now looking forward	4 (ne)	1,3 %
On the surface high-quality, casual, challenging	3 (N)	0,9 %
Helsinki-oriented, is not considered to be a viable player	2 (N)	0,6 %
TOTAL	317	100,0 %

In this open-ended question the goal was to measure the respondent's ability to identify the *brand image* from the memory with three optional adjectives. The results of this Table 1 are presented in order from the most described adjectives into less used adjectives. The percentages are calculated based on the *total number of adjectives*, which was 317 and they are combined with similar kind of adjectives given in this open-ended question.

Most of the descriptions were positive (203 mentions) of the total, which is a very positive result. However, the result could be a bit higher. However, the image of Excellence Finland was mostly experienced reliable, businesslike and stable likewise considered well-established and permanent. Secondly, the respondents felt the company is professional and expert in its own field. Also, quality-orientation and quality-awareness was well recognized, and Excellence Finland was considered as a high-quality company.

Thirdly, the operations were seen renewable and reform capable and moreover educational and advanced. This appears to be a sign, that this target group have seen the developmental direction within the company.

The image was additionally experienced enthusiastic, and Excellence Finland operating on behalf of Finland and companies. Descriptive adjectives of the image were also supportive, positive and informative, to name a few. However, the same amount (16 mentions) of the replies reveal, that the company image is, at the same time, experienced old-fashioned, stuck and even slow. Also, Laatukskus as a word sounded a bit obsolescent and stiff to some likewise the same sum of respondents felt the current image was boring, unsurprising, lame, passive and colorless, to name a few. Quite surprisingly, some also felt the image is unknown (especially to large groups), or

there is no image at all! Some also thought that the image is invisible, unrealistic and Excellence Finland is partly looking still for themselves.

This was not a very good result, but it reveals opportunity to develop and improve the current brand image. Some replies also revealed that the image is engineer-, and agency-like, technical, theoretical and conservative to name a few. These are actually neutral replies, but should however, be well noted. It was likewise quite surprising, how average result came with well known, recognized or known image. At the same time, the image was experienced even more, closed, narrowly focused, self-sufficient, distant and inwardly warmed up, to name a few. However, it was encouraging, that the current image and the company was, in the meanwhile, experienced conversational, customer-oriented, human, informative, easily approachable and friendly with 10 mentions.

The image and the company itself was considered with 2,2-2,5% indeterminate, no position on issues, (non-profit), indistinct, with no clear role and expensive. To continue, about 2% of the respondents also felt the image is currently neutral, calm or the education level is just basic, focusing too much into processes or quality development. Simultaneously the image was experienced traditional, domestic likewise blue and white. Blue and white as well as domestic may refer to Finland, meaning Excellence Finland is more sighted Finnish than an international player.

Next, it was very surprising, that only under 2% of the positive mentions were, for example, versatile, wide-ranging, networking and cooperative ones. To analyze, this could mean, that the range of services is not versatile enough or, the respondents feel they were not offered that many options of training, consulting- or other services. Also, networking and cooperation were not at the expected level, if we consider this sampling survey of the current customers. Perhaps, this target group feels the cooperation is too unilateral or the networking could be better. However, the respondents also experienced the image is already seriously taken, profound, honest and the company gives a good example, in turn the percentage was not at the expected level, only 4 mentions of the total.

Additionally, although the company image was seen international, interesting and promising, the percentage share of this was the same as previous one. As earlier mentioned, if Excellence Finland wants to be considered as an international player, it really should focus on promoting it more.

In the meanwhile, 1,3% of the replies revealed, the company was small or small that tries to be great. Also, some added that the Excellence Finland is like in "tribes", meaning probably the image is closed or selective. However, the improvement was also there, the activities were not seen bureaucratic anymore, "like in the old days". Next, the table 2 shows the first contact the respondents had with Excellence Finland.

Table 2: Where or how the respondents first hear about Excellence Finland_current (n=116)

Description of the respondents, open ended question	Number of mentions	Percentage
Through the work (tasks), the employer recommended a supervisor	28	19,4 %
The employer is a (deciding) member, Membership (single member), member of the division	19	13,2 %
Through a colleague or a familiar person, through the predecessor	17	11,8 %
Internet (e.g. When looking for training providers)	15	10,4 %
More than 20-30 years ago, long-term co-operation, joined the Quality Association in 1995	14	9,7 %
Courses in presentation material, course selection, brochures	7	4,9 %
Do not remember (long been involved for more than 10yrs.)	7	4,9 %
By e-mail	5	3,5 %
School course, further studies, Aalto University	4	2,8 %
General knowledge, familiar over many years	4	2,8 %
Some training, acquaintance been training from America	4	2,8 %
Representative from the Quality Association contacted	3	2,1 %
Quality and Development Manager-training, Quality Managers' annual meeting	3	2,1 %
At the same occasion, as a trainer / speaker at the Laatukeskus course	3	2,1 %

From the Quality Manager	3	2,1 %
Quality Division, the establishment of the county the local area of the split transaction	2	1,4 %
Through the Quality Competition	2	1,4 %
A magazine (90 century), based on books (Kai Laamanen, etc.)	2	1,4 %
EFQM training, current work is related to the EFQM model	2	1,4 %
TOTAL	144	100,0 %

The question number 3 was to get the details, how and where did the respondents first hear about Excellence Finland in the first place and makes them to remember. This open question relative to *brand recall* aim to measure the accessibility of the brand in customer's memory.

Most of the respondents first heard about Excellence Finland through the work tasks (developing it), or for example employer or supervisor recommended the company services. Second highest result was, that the employer was a (deciding) member, there were an existing membership (single member) or the respondent was a member of the division. Thirdly, most common first contact was knowing through a colleague, familiar person or the predecessors told about the company. 10,4% were looking for e.g. Training providers and found Excellence through the Internet. Some had a long history with the company and started co-operation more than 20-30 years ago, for example joined the Quality Association in 1995. The rest of the first contacts can be seen in the Table 2 above, for example courses or trainings or a representative of Excellence Finland came to visit. Probably, one of the most important question was related to the respondents' knowledge or a picture of the company's current brand or image. This is shown in the next figure.

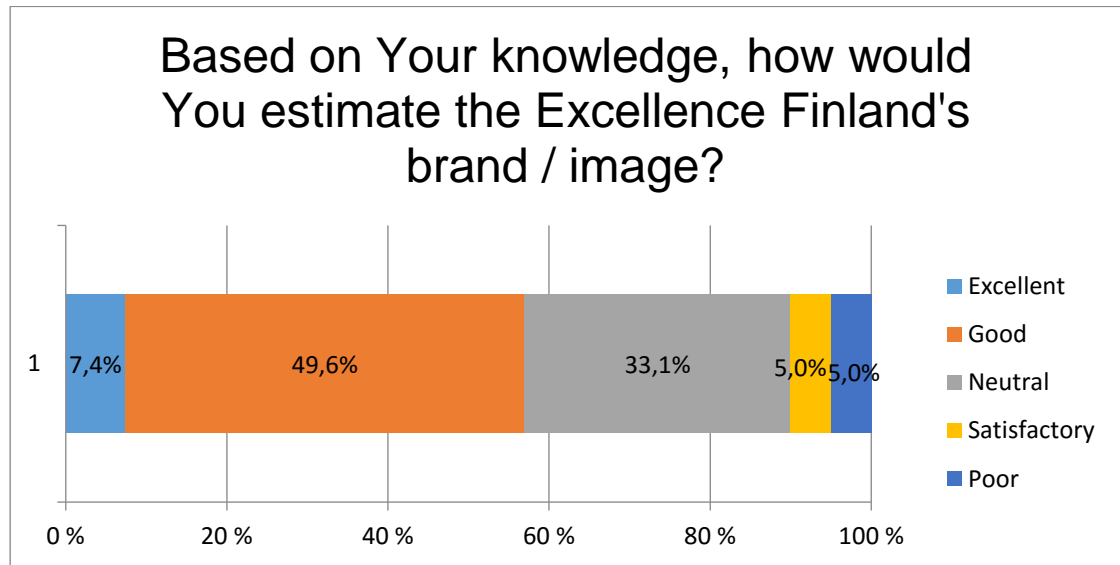


Figure 10: How to rate Excellence Finland brand / image based on respondent's knowledge (n=121)

The figure shows good and neutral quite close to each other, but only 7,4 % respondents gave the excellent evaluation. This result reveals, that the brand image is not currently that clear among the current customers. Excellence Finland should consider, how to develop this lack of knowledge of brand image to grow the excellent rating in the future. However, 49,6% evaluated the current brand image good, it is yet considerable that also almost same amount 43,1% gave weak, satisfactory or neutral answers. Also, compared to the very first question, this result is quite similar compared to the knowledge, how Excellence Finland is known.

One of the important aspects of the questionnaire was also to discover which media channels current customers use and how often, because there was not a clear picture of this within the company. Thus, to be able to focus communication on this target group, each media channel was introduced separately asking the respondents to rate their preferred media outlets from not at all to daily axis.

All the media channels are now below listed and evaluated from scale 1-5, how often respondents follow each media channel. (1=not at all, 2=randomly, 3=sometimes 4=quite often 5= many times per week and 6=daily). This question could be related to the *brand recall*, how the customers seek information

about the case company through the listed media channels. First media channel is Internet, referring to the Figure 11.

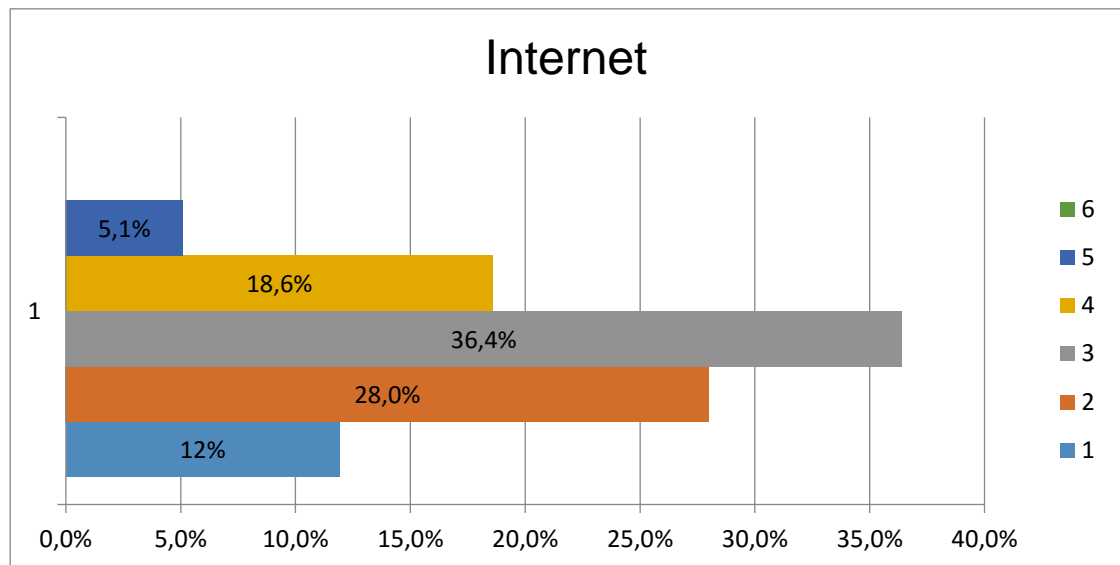


Figure 11: Mostly followed media channels: Internet (n=118)

The outcome show, that Internet is mostly followed sometimes with 36,4%. Quite close with 28%, Internet is followed among this target group randomly. Third biggest percentage share follow Internet quite often, 18,6%. No one follows Internet on daily basis, 12% not at all and 5,1% many times per week. Three persons skipped this question, which could mean it was a bit misleading and the real meaning was not understood properly. This question was meant to be related to the Excellence Finland's website, and if this was put in the question, the answers may vary a bit. Now, it gives the general picture of how much people follow Internet. However, compared to the Table 2, Internet was with 10,4% the fourth first contact channel to some respondents, which makes it one of the most followed media channel among top four.

Facebook is the second media channel to be evaluated. Figure 12 next reveals, how much it is followed among the current customers.

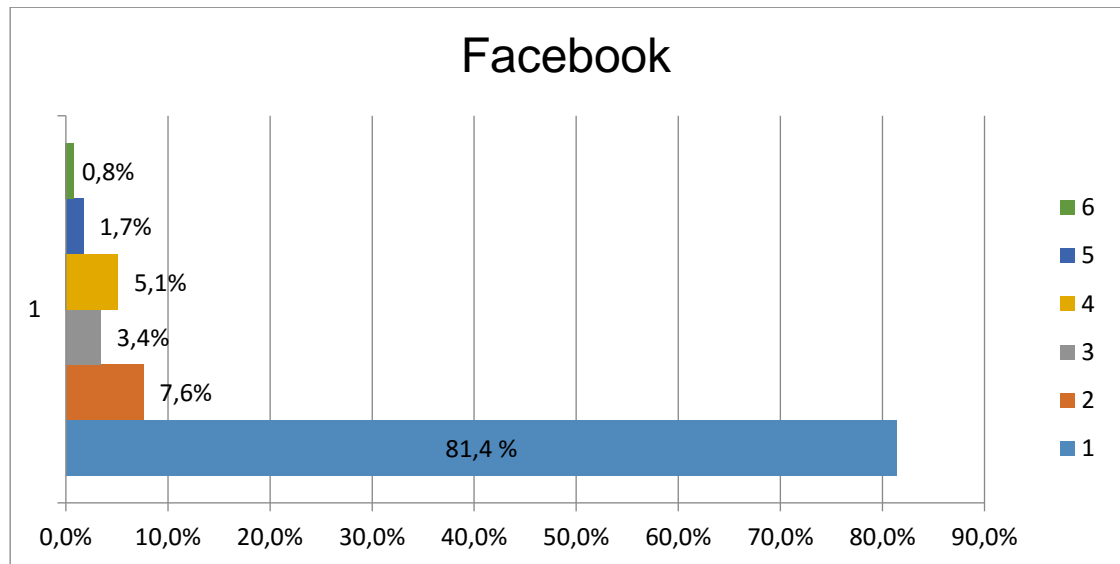


Figure 12: Mostly followed media channels: Facebook (n=118)

It was quite surprising how little Facebook is followed, as much as 81,4 % answered not at all. All together 11% followed Facebook randomly or sometimes and approximately 7,6% quite often, many times per week or daily. Excellence Finland has Facebook-pages and currently there are 336 likes and 318 followers. The Facebook -site could be more advertised among current customers, since potential is there. In addition, amount of likes or followers could be higher, compared to the potential of 674 organizations of 2319 current customers and members.

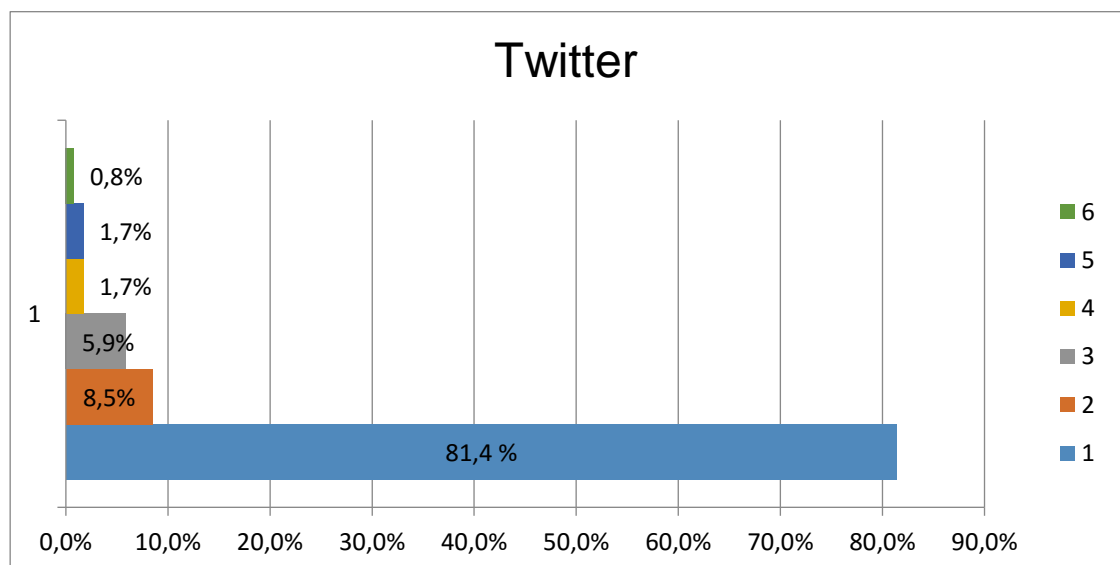


Figure 13: Mostly followed media channels: Twitter (n=118)

Most of the replies were *not at all*, meaning that with 81,4% share, same as Facebook, respondents do not follow Twitter. All together 14,4% followed Fa-

cebook randomly or sometimes, which is a bit more than Facebook. Also, approximately 4,2% followed Twitter quite often, many times per week or daily, which is less than Facebook.

Excellence Finland has currently 526 followers on Twitter, which is a lot more than Facebook's 318 followers. However, the content is only in Finnish under name 'Laatukeskus', so it gives a clear picture, that the company is focusing only on domestic advertising, marketing and informing on this media channel. The next media channel to be evaluated is LinkedIn.

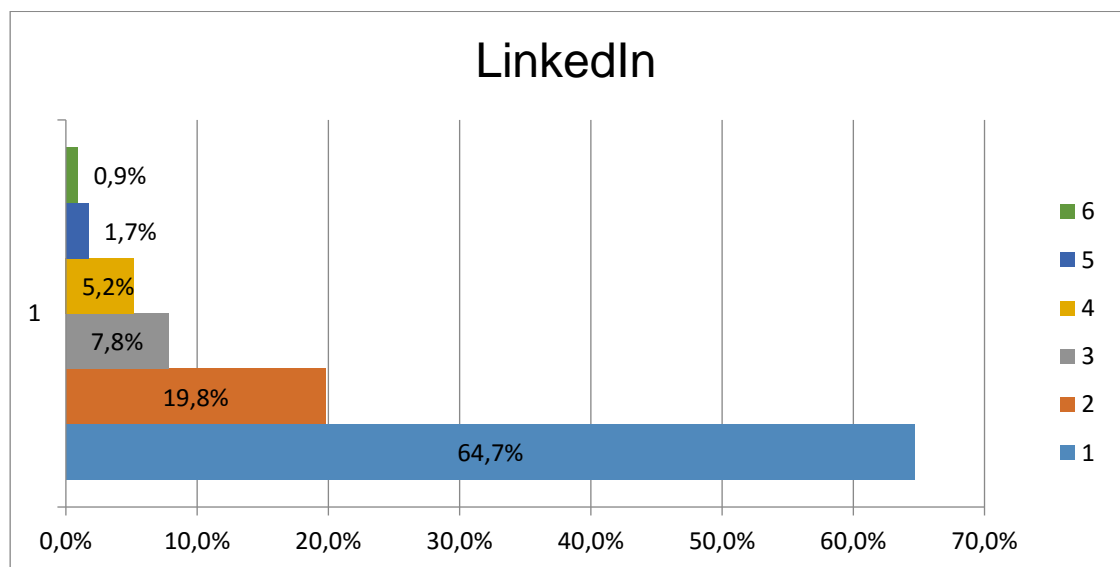


Figure 14: Mostly followed media channels: LinkedIn (n=116)

Like Facebook and Twitter, also majority do not follow LinkedIn at all with 64,7% share. However, this media channel is nevertheless the most followed between these three, however Internet is the still number one.

Approximately 27,6% follow LinkedIn *randomly* or *sometimes*, which is a lot more than the previous two, but a lot less than Internet (altogether 64,4%). In comparison, LinkedIn is also followed quite often, many times per week and even on daily basis more than Facebook and Twitter, with all together 7,8% share. In comparison, Internet is altogether followed on the same sectors 23,7%, but not at all on daily basis. Additionally, LinkedIn has the largest number of followers, 807 compared to Facebook and Twitter. The last media channel for the analysis is Laatulehti-magazine.

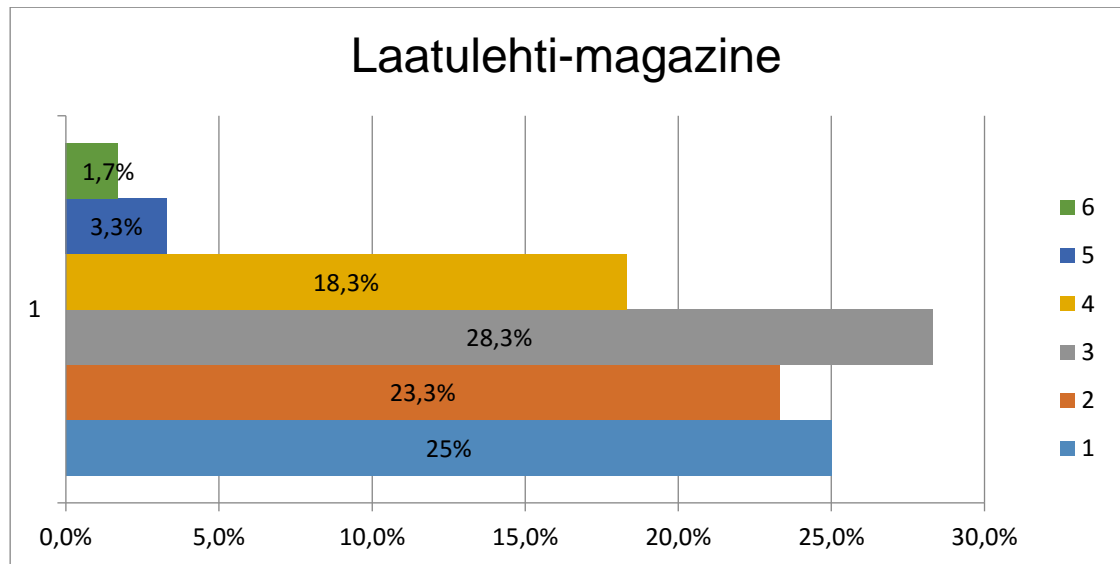


Figure 15: Mostly followed media channels: Laatulehti-magazine, (n=120)

Although 25% of the respondents do not follow Laatulehti-magazine at all, it is still the most followed media channel of all the existing ones, if we take the daily basis rate, which is 1,7% share. As high as 51,6% follow this channel randomly or sometimes, which is far more than the other media channels' results, except Internet. Additionally, over 23% altogether follow it quite often, many times per week, or daily. However, Internet is followed 23,7% on these same sectors, which is slightly more. The results show that Internet and Laatulehti-magazine are the most popular media channels of the company and mostly followed. The last question referring to the media channels, is revealing the possibility, that some other media channels is being followed.

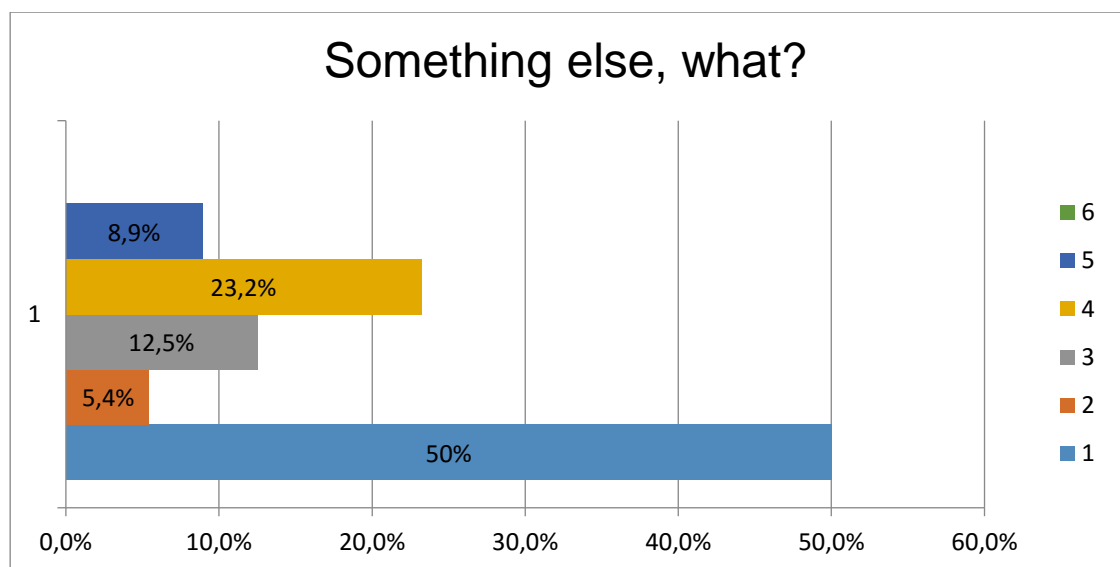


Figure 16: Mostly followed media channels: Something else, what? (n=56)

The last question was intended to find out, whether respondents followed some other media channels. The result shows, that 50% do not follow any other channels than the mentioned ones. For example, 23,2% follow quite often other channels, but unfortunately it was not discovered, which other channels the respondent were using. This is a slight problem, which presumably occurs in this Survey Pal-program, that it does not allow to put multiple choice- and open question replies at the same time. Also, it was a small error in question layout, that could have been avoided with more experience on the program. Next question gives the answer regarding media visibility of the case company.



Figure 16: Evaluation of Excellence Finland's media visibility_current (n=120)

This question was chosen to reveal the media visibility of the current *brand image*. As can be seen in this figure 16, the media visibility is mostly evaluated limited, with 44% share. In fact, among the international partners the result was also limited, with 67%. (Figure 34)

Further it is obvious, that no one thought the current media visibility is very good and only 8% considered it to be good and 7% in comparison, poor. However, the media visibility was considered quite good with 38% of the total replies. The open-ended questions, moreover reveal, how the most answers on how to develop brand image were related to the lack of media visibility and visibility in general. The development suggestions to increase the media visibility were mostly related with television, writing articles in traditional magazines or newspapers (Read more in Table 4). Visibility is also strongly linked

to Branding Strategy, which was earlier explained in the theoretical framework. The trustworthiness of the case company is our next issue.

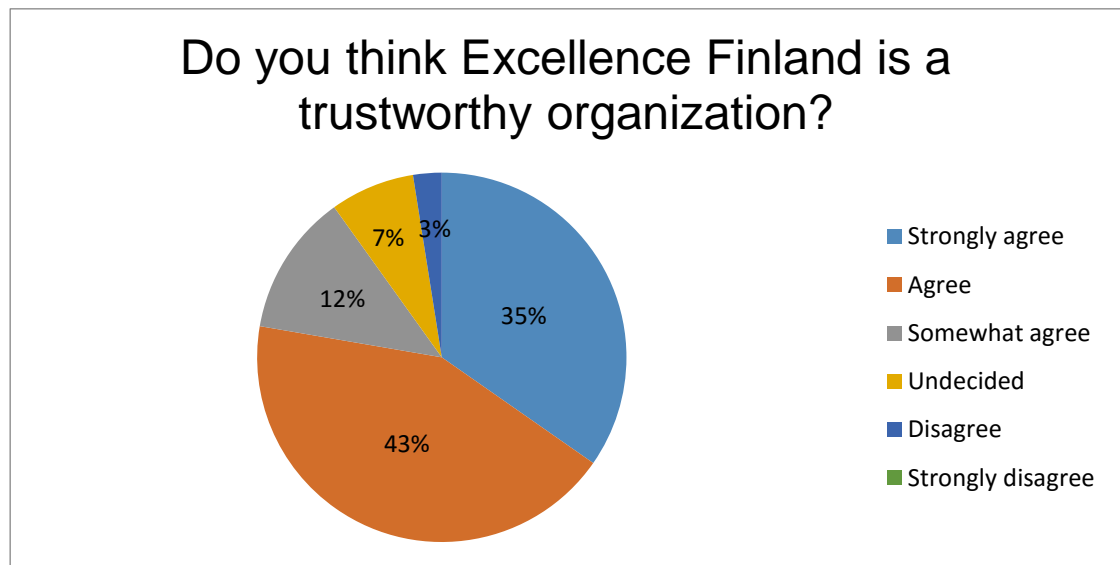


Figure 18: Trustworthiness of Excellence Finland_current (n=121)

The same question was presented to the international partners and the results vary a bit. This question was to find out *brand awareness* or related term of *brand equity* about the experiences towards the brand. For example, 67% strongly agreed of them that Excellence Finland is a trustworthy organization and likewise only 35% of the current ones. Although, quite similar kind of results were shown in the second highest rating of agree-sector, 43% of the current ones and 33% of the international ones. To conclude, 78% of the total of current customers strongly agree or agree that Excellence Finland is a trustworthy organization, so this is a very good result and the answering percent was 100%. However, those who rated somewhat agree, undecided or disagree shows the percentage share of 22%, which is rather high. This is something, that Excellence Finland should pay attention to and analyze this result. Second question is referring to the services of the case company.

Which of our services have you utilized during the last two years? You may choose multiple options.

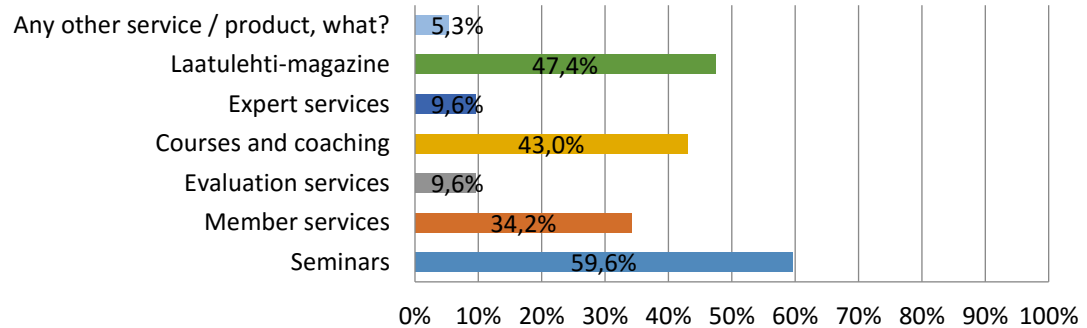


Figure 19: Which services have the respondents used during the last two years. Multiple option allowed (n=114/238)

The following question asked the respondents, which services they had used during the last two years. This question was chosen to see *brand recall* actions related to brand awareness. Seminars were clearly the most popular ones with 59,6%. Not surprisingly, Laatulehti-magazine was very close with 47,4%, although its content was hoped to be stronger, meaningful and more involved. Courses and coaching reached 43,0% share. Member services were also important and reached the 34,2% share of the total. All the rest can easily show in this figure 18, but again, the slight mistake with the Survey Pal appeared in the Any other service/product, what? -sector. The questionnaire did not allow to mention, *what* other services respondents had used. However, 53,3% share did use some other services, or a product mentioned here. Additional question now asks, whether the attended event or service was well implemented and why.

Table 3: Event implementation, usefulness and reasoning (P=Positive, N=Negative, ne=neutral, na=No answer, n=64)

Was the event / service well implemented, useful, and why?	Number of mentions	Percentage
Lecturers professionals, expert coaches, expertise at its best, outside actors also top speakers	17 (P)	18,3

Innovative ideas, perspectives, insights into your work, inspirational, energetic morning, topical/timely	9 (P)	9,7
The services are well organized and reliable, the content useful, good subjects. You get what you expected. Seminars are interesting, good case-examples.	8 (P)	8,6
The event was well-implemented, much useful information, occasions were useful, practical	7 (P)	7,5
Very good and useful, responded to the need. Occasions updated data well and help to renew, the framework/settings were functional, good facilities and serving, schedules hold	6 (P)	6,5
Too "marketing" oriented course/ coaching, varies quite a lot according to the themes of the event and / or selected performers. More proactive, contacts on behalf of Excellence Finland hoped. The average age of the participants relatively high. Informing before training poor. The auditors left a strange picture to some attendees.	6 (N)	6,5
Networking was a fair value added, the process network is useful	5 (P)	5,4
With regards to the trainings, it was comprehensive and of high quality, the training arrangements were excellent, the exact training I just needed	4 (P)	4,3
Ok, pretty good, sometimes interesting articles, pretty good, clear overview	4 (Ne)	4,3

<p>The Quality and Development Manager training was good, the topics were interesting and useful to me.</p> <p>Regional Division- and Benchmarking Club Events: Interesting Activities</p> <p>The Innovation Seminar in Prague in 2014, was good.</p>	3 (P)	3,2
<p>Quality Days in Tampere was a wonderful opportunity, well organized and there are interesting presentations, Quality Days (Laatupäivät) are a good event.</p>	3 (P)	3,2
<p>I only take part in events that are acute and therefore become of immediate benefit!</p> <p>I have recommended trainings for my own networks.</p> <p>By participating in a division, it is very important if the goal is continuous learning!</p>	3 (P)	3,2
<p>As an evaluator, I have not used, you get information on what is happening in quality matters.</p>	3 (Ne)	3,2
<p>The annual Quality Day 2015 surprisingly dull - expected a lot more attendees and exhibitors.</p> <p>Some of the performers very miserable, technical training - no time to ensure that the students learn.</p>	3 (N)	3,2
<p>More versatile content, member services may receive too little information, even in member divisions.</p> <p>The content depends greatly on the lecturers; Even partially stalled</p>	3 (N)	3,2
<p>Yes, good speakers and ambience (Q-Prof, spring 2016), Q-prof, good themes, meet with colleagues</p>	2 (P)	2,2

Was slightly different from the advertised event	1 (Ne)	1,1
The quality magazine (Laatulehti) is a good publication, interesting.	1 (P)	1,1
Prices are competitive with other suppliers, but often high compared to the benefits.	1 (P& Ne)	1,1
The EFQM assessment was well executed.	1 (P)	1,1
Services seem useful and well-executed, though not very good practical experience.	1 (P& Ne)	1,1
We still do not know the results, so it's too early to say.	1 (Ne)	1,1
The events are mainly in Helsinki. Occasions should also be in Eastern Finland.	1 (Ne)	1,1
TOTAL	93	100,0

Additional question was an open-ended question about the event implementation, usefulness and reasoning. This question is under *brand image* dimensions of the products or services provided by the case company. However, experiences could also be linked to the brand awareness through brand equity.

The respondents were asked, whether the event they attended was well-arranged, useful and why. The answering rate was quite low, 64 answers meaning 52,9%. However, the given responses were very well thought out likewise rich in content. The most mentions were positive and concerned the professional lecturers and expert coaches likewise the outside speakers. The respondents secondly felt, that the events offered latest ideas and -perspectives, as well as insights into ones' own work. Moreover, the events were mostly experienced inspirational, energetic and topical. Thirdly, the services were experienced well organized and reliable, the content useful with good subjects. Someone even mentioned, how 'you get what you expect'. Furthermore, praise was given to comprehensive presentations from various industries. In addition, seminars were experienced interesting with good case-examples.

To name one example, in 2014 organized Innovation seminar in Prague was particularly mentioned and experienced as a well-organized group trip. The attendees were exchanging ideas there with each other all the time, 'from morning until night time'. One said, there were also very good speakers in the seminars and one seminar, was soon enough to be used in practice.

However, quite many also experienced the course or coaching they attended, was too "marketing" -oriented and varied quite a lot according to the themes of the event and / or selected performers. Also, occasions were hoped to be more proactive and some felt the contacts on behalf of Excellence Finland were missing.

This could mean, that Excellence Finland should concentrate more on each theme and be less marketing other services in their occasions, and contact more their current customers and members. This could simply happen by asking, from time to time, how they are doing and refer to the latest meeting or a subject discussed. Also, the attendees may need more concrete point on the topic, no marketing on which course can develop more that expertise.

The average age of the participants was also experienced relatively high and informing before training poor. The auditors also left a strange picture to some attendees. The age distribution is probably hard to effect on behalf of the company, but it is an interesting point of view. However, the informing before each training is something easy to improve in the future.

In comparison to successful Prague seminar, the annual Quality Day 2015 was experienced surprisingly dull to some and it was expected a lot more attendees and exhibitors there. Some of the performers were felt even very miserable, and the training too technical, with no time to ensure that the students learn. Concrete example was an exercise, where one had to enter a chapter into a 'particular cell'. This was experienced challenging or too technical to some. Additionally, some members felt, that the content of the occasions should have been more versatile likewise member services may receive too little information, even in the member divisions. In addition, some experienced the content of the occasions or event greatly depend on the lectures and are

partially even stalled. This could mean, that Excellence Finland should pay attention to the quality of the lectures, that they remain interesting to each target group and the content is versatile and tailored. Also, member services could be better, based on this question. One mentioned a development hint to utilize more the offering of the 'outsiders' rather than concentrate only on the 'insiders'.

To conclude, LaatuLehti -magazine was experienced an interesting and a good magazine, but was mentioned only once. This could mean, that the marketing of it should be more deliberate, because it was the second in mostly utilized services during recent two years among this target group of current customers as well as members (Read more Figure 15). One of the most important question of this study is presented next, how to develop Excellence Finland's brand image.

Table 4: How to develop Excellence Finland's brand image (n=84)

Description of the respondents, open ended question	Number of mentions	Percentage
More visibility needed	15	13,5
More international, modern, younger and fresh brand image	14	12,6
Image is already good	8	7,2
Price reduction	7	6,3
Public statements	6	5,4
Concreteness and a pragmatic supply of quality issues	6	5,4
Additional power and investment in communication and marketing	5	4,5
More links with companies and colleges / universities and SME companies, new partners	5	4,5
Increasing awareness	4	3,6
Interesting events also in the provinces	4	3,6
Unclear brand image - what does it present? Name "Laatukeskus" does not	4	3,6

match the company operations. Unclear focus and mission - more stories		
Courses tailored to customer needs	4	3,6
Focus on the right quality	3	2,7
Smoother, less technical	3	2,7
Inspirational, more brisk and interesting image	3	2,7
More versatility	2	1,8
More descriptive of what one does, raising the profile	2	1,8
Close to individuals, real life, industry	2	1,8
More customer focus and solution-oriented way and business oriented	2	1,8
The development of activities and services	2	1,8
Regional divisions stronger	2	1,8
Services closer to the management	2	1,8
More informing and events	1	0,9
Activeness on Twitter	1	0,9
Cannot say	1	0,9
Long-term influence on leaders	1	0,9
Less aggressive sales	1	0,9
TOTAL	111	100,0

One of the most interesting questions was the respondent's opinions and ideas on how to develop the current brand image of the company. This was also the research question of this study and only related to the current *brand image*.

The most answers were related to the lack of media visibility and visibility in general. It was suggested to increase the media visibility with television, for example one recent Tv series of Finnish Work belief ("Suomalaisen työn uskomuksia") was considered one option to Excellence Finland. However, the author did not find such series anywhere, so probably one was referring to "8 myths of work- Tv-series" (*8 myyttiä työstä*), which can still be seen on Yle

Areena (yleareena.fi), online. Additionally, it was also felt, that Excellence Finland is not visible enough on national or traditional medias, for example Laatu-lehti-magazine was not experienced to be enough and its content was also hoped to be stronger, meaningful and more involved. It was in addition claimed, that big audiences do not even know the company exists. The development ideas considering visibility included examples of writing articles in traditional magazines and newspapers and one idea was a First of May event ("Vappu-tempaus" in Finnish) on a day of Finnish Quality (*Laatupäivät*).

The second development theme was related to younger, fresher and more international brand image. The people and speakers were seen "grey" to some, which could mean boring or colorless personalities or styles of speeches. Quite many also wished that younger people would be involved to the activities of the company. Too less information about the trainings, and the concern on the field, that it is not known that such trainings exist on behalf of Excellence Finland, was one astonishment. However, third biggest, 7,2% of the respondents felt the current brand image is good already as it is.

Price reduction was the fourth biggest issue, with 6,3% share. The course and training prices were suggested to come in modern times and some felt the prices are now "in the clouds". Next, some replies, 5,4%, concerned about more publicity, visibility and public statements. Some thought the current issues related to quality development could take even more public stance, for example, speaking in social media is enough if, for any reason, it is not possible to take a position, for example, in a newspaper. Furthermore, more robust presentations in most major publications were needed, in some thoughts. The same share 5,4% was shown on concreteness and a pragmatic supply of quality issues. Current customers were hoping more concreteness and pragmatic supply of quality issues in addition to the top issues, as well as on the basics, where Finland has, obviously, a lot of work to do. Some felt, that too much fuss is in small circles and separate, when Excellence Finland could or should combine and use the country's best resources for the benefit of those in need.

The result of 4,5% share was also on additional power and investment in communication and marketing likewise getting into headlines. For example, one

noted, after the 'Quality competition', the number of publicity has been driven by the 'Best Workplace Competition' in Finland. The marketing was also wished to be more active, but less only marketing-oriented as well as providing services. Customer meetings were suggested to be increased, to hear more about the services. Moreover, the same share 4,5% was likewise on more links with companies and colleges, universities and SME companies. Advertising in industry publications, service development, co-operation with companies, by supporting SMEs, the Finnish economy and exports was experienced to grow. One also winked to open connections to KARVI, The National Education Evaluation Center, which is an independent agency responsible for national evaluation of teaching and training (Cf. more Karvi.fi). Also, new partners were hoped, some noted, how often the same organizations tell about good practices, such as Eloranta et al.

The increasing brand awareness was additionally experienced important, with 3,6% share. For example, presentation round at the decision-making members or a visible role through the 'Quality days' (Laatupäivät) also means the national media to some. One suggested purchased STT news coverage for Quality award (Laatupalkinto) -recipients. As much development ideas were presented on organizing events also in provinces, not just in Helsinki.

When it comes to international brand image, also 3,6% of the respondents thought it was unclear or missing and the obsolescent image was hoped to divert into younger, modern, exiting, dynamic, innovative and extensive direction. Moreover, the graphic design was one additional thing to develop as well, possibly more colors – update to this day. The brand image was recommended to regenerate into agile and less formal external direction likewise the name "*Laatukeskus*" needed rethinking into modern version, referring to some opinions. Some well-noted, that "Quality" is a challenging term, because it is associated with virtually everything within a company or organization. *'So what brand does the company want to represent, and should the name 'Laatukeskus' to be changed'*, could be the questions directed to Excellence Finland? It is true, that at first, one should develop activities and content. Some thought the name '*Quality Center /Laatukeskus*' is not responsible for the content of the current activity. One suggestion for a new name was presented as *Productivity Center*. Another option for a small seminar name was

'Q-Prof'. In addition, many thought that the focus and mission is still unclear, and more stories were hoped, because the concept of quality was experienced awkward to some. Perhaps the Brand Storybook could help with this (cf. for example Ch. 2.1)

The courses tailored to customer needs was as well wished with 3,6% share. For example, by emphasizing the benefits of customer companies, people who do not work with quality people could be more interested in even more of the business. One suggested, how he/she would change the courses to be interesting by increasing the speed, customer focus, and resolution. Also, one would emphasize tailor-made (multidimensional) courses and top expertise in the field of customer needs. In addition, Excellence Finland could promise the quality guarantee and the price would depend on the results and customer satisfaction. Also, it was noted how the development should focus on the opening of quality-jargon and the 'quality-believers' should come to the real world. The development of the brand image should in addition be linked to doing something that genuinely helps companies and organizations.

Some other opinions about the current brand image, were that it is held the quality self-worth piling underlining the meaning of the quality work to meet the standards or in other words, imago in which the quality of self-worth is maintained, underlining the importance of standards and quality work that is specifically employed. Further, Excellence Finland was felt it lacks the courage to question its own work. Some mentioned, that they are not looking for the latest information from the company. Suggestions were to renew the brand image in such a way that the Excellence Finland would be considered as a primary source when looking for modern management methods and, especially, for future-oriented management methods and leading to the improvement of productivity through high-quality, cost-effective tools.

To conclude, stylishness was experienced good and to be maintained, as well as reliability and expertise, but, perhaps a bit more descriptive of what one does should be clearer. The Excellence was advised to focus more on the right quality, meaning a broad concept of quality, not seeking market excellence, but beneficial promotion of the right quality. The angle should be more of a quality expert organization whose expertise sells itself. The Excellence

Finland must come to people and not as they now assume that people come to them. The next question is important on respective of sales-oriented questions, how likely would the respondents buy the services in the future.

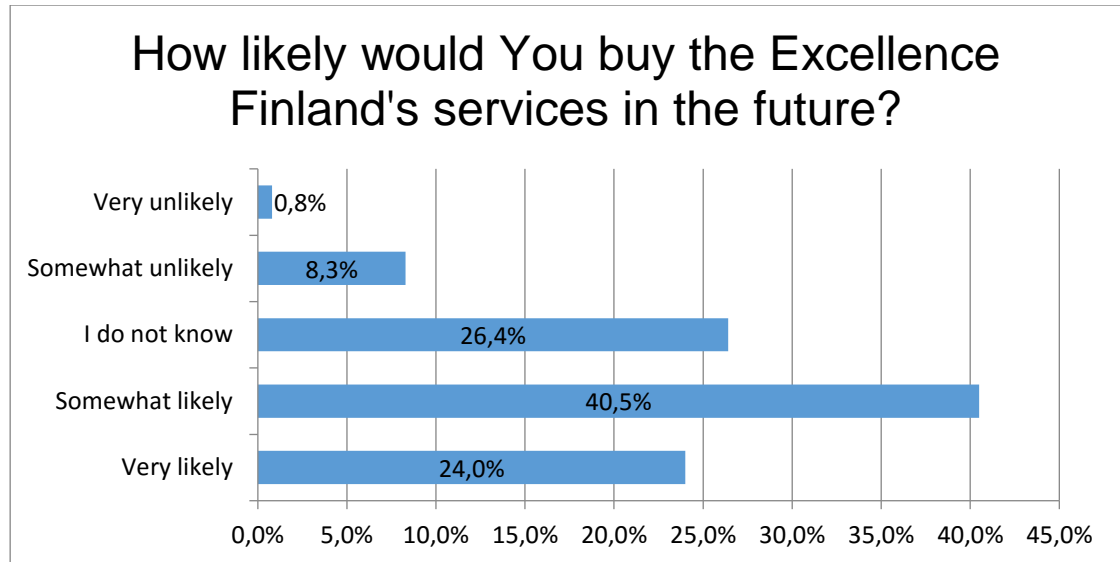


Figure 20: How likely would the respondents buy the company services in the future (n=121)

The following question asked the respondents to evaluate, how likely they would buy the company services in the future in scale from very unlikely to very likely. Generally, the question reveals quite positive opinions towards the decision to buy, and also reveals the *brand recall* aspect. In total 60,5% would very likely or *somewhat likely* buy the services in the future, although quite a few did not know, what to answer. Of those who had an opinion, about 9,1% would *very unlikely* or *somewhat unlikely* buy the services in the future. Excellence Finland should concentrate on this these three groups who were not sure or would *definitely* or *somewhat unlikely* not buy, and analyze this considering the survey results, for example the previous question (Table 4) reveal some points, how to develop the services. The following question asks about recommendations, would respondents recommend the services or not.

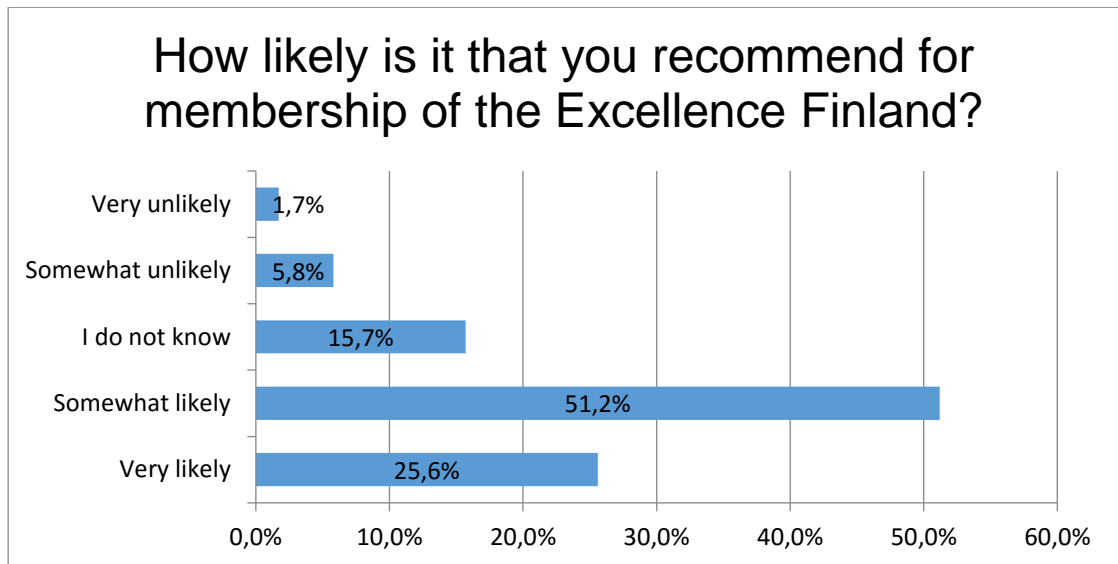


Figure 21: How likely would the respondents recommend the services of Excellence Finland in the future (n=121)

This question was chosen to find out *brand recall*, which again is related to the term of brand awareness. Overall, most respondents would recommend the services of the company in the future, in total very likely or somewhat likely opinions were approximately 71,2%, which is a great result. However, again quite high percentage did not know what to answer, with 15,7% likewise 7,5% would very unlikely or somewhat unlikely recommend the services. This result may reveal, that the company should provide more information of the services, consider price reduction and add customer meetings, like for example the previous Table 4 showed. The last question asks the respondents of their position in their own working place.

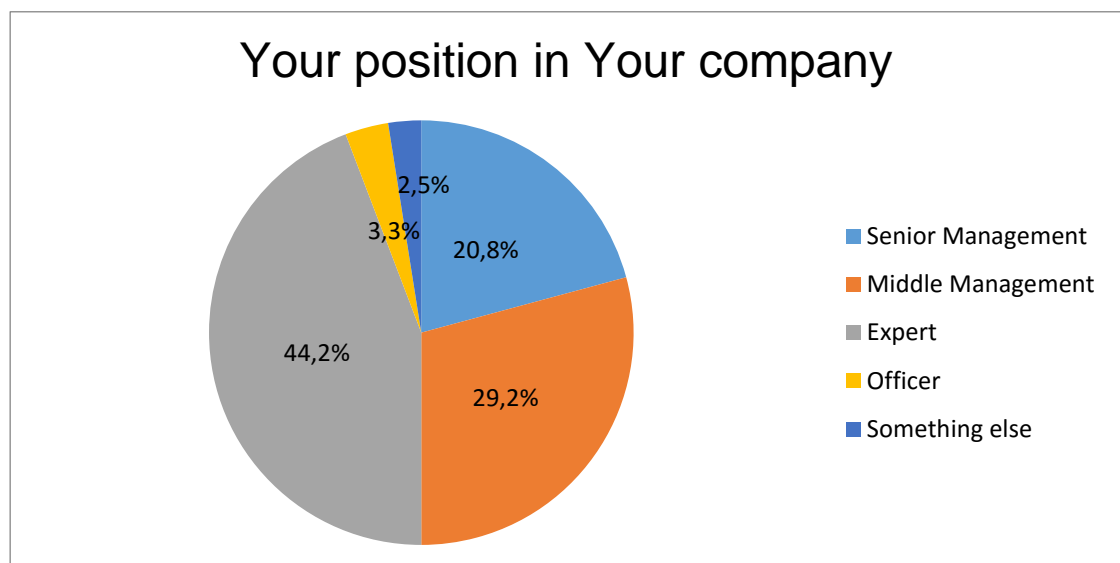


Figure 22: Position of the respondents in their own company_current (n=120)

When it comes to the position of the respondents in their own companies, majority of them work in the Expert level with 44% or secondly in the Middle Management level, with 29%. Senior Management was third with 21% share. This question was asked to discover *statistics* and valuable information about the current customers to strengthen relationship with them likewise build trust and credibility. Presumably, the 50% share of the Senior or Middle Management was the main target group, which was in this survey now accomplished. However, the Expert level is also important group, because on that level is usually the most practical experience of the company processes and suggestions on how to develop them is very concrete.

6.2 Potential customers

The questionnaire was sent to 286 potential customers and 31 replies were received. This gives approximately answering percentage rate of 10,85% among this target group. Some of the questions were skipped and not answered. This is also well noted in the analysis as *no answer*. This is very normal behavior regarding online questionnaires and occurred likewise in each target group, but luckily happened very seldom.

Most of the respondent were women 67/100%. Also, over a quarter of the respondents, were in the age group of 55-64 with 33,3% share. The age groups of 45-54 (23,3%) and 35-44 (20%) were almost equal. The rest age groups were 65+ group, replies with 16,7% share and under 34-years group with 6,7% share of the total respondents. The following question request to describe the image of the case company with 3 adjectives of free choice.

Table 5: How to describe the image of Laatukeskus with 3 free choice adjectives (n=29)

Classifieds open answers	Number of mentions	Percentage
Knowledgeable, professional, skilled	16	18,8 %
Reliable, solid, Finnish, important, non-profit	10	11,8 %
High-quality, standard, stable	9	10,6 %
Businesslike, clear, edged, a key-issue oriented	8	9,4 %
Inspiring, effective, active, full of ideas, enthusiastic	7	8,2 %
Neutral, restrained, good, theoretical, conservative, official	6	7,1 %

A bit dull, rigid, plain, remained among the top, elderly	6	7,1 %
Progressive, renewing, innovative, following trends/time	5	5,9 %
Evolving, clinical, enterprising	5	5,9 %
Traditional, consistent (quality), agency-like	4	4,7 %
Open, friendly, warm, caring	4	4,7 %
Unknown, unseen, closed	3	3,5 %
Expensive	2	2,4 %
TOTAL	85	100 %

This table easily shows the mostly used adjectives of the Laatukeskus' image description in order. It is very encouraging, how potential customers consider Excellence Finland as professional and skilled likewise high-quality service provider, important and as well they know, it is a non-profit association. It was also a very positive signal, how Excellence Finland is also experienced effective, inspiring, active and rich of ideas. In turn, the image was experienced neutral, conservative, official, even a bit dull and elderly, to mention a few. In addition, a few answers described the current image invisible, expensive and even closed. It is considerable, how to increase the visibility and renew the image to become more modern and less plain for the potential customers. However, the primary stress in this question was more positive than negative. Also, only two respondents skip this question, meaning 6,5% in total. Again, now is requested to know, how did the respondents first hear about Excellence Finland.

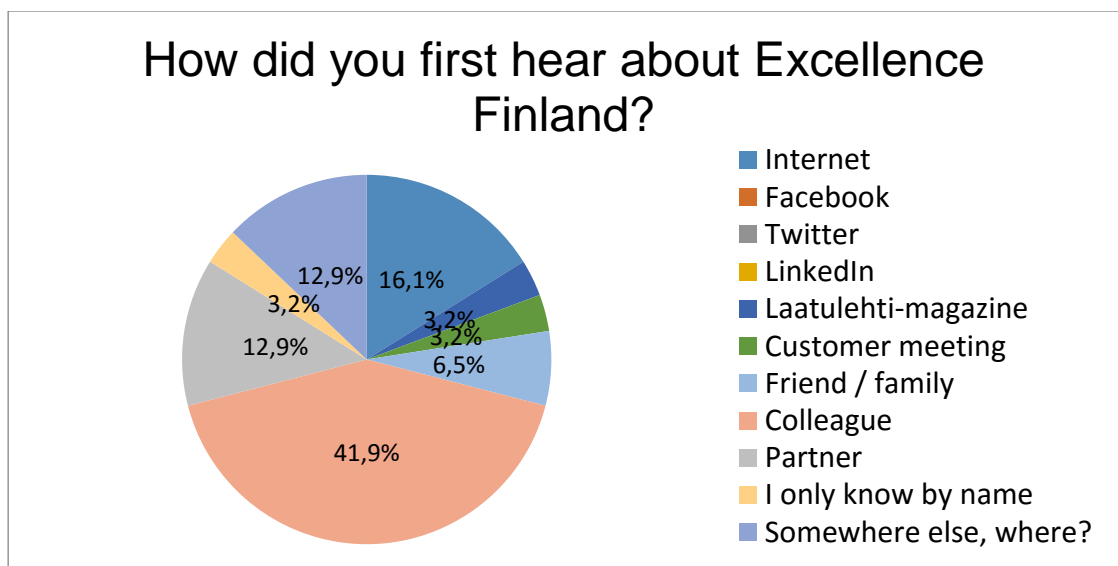


Figure 23: How did the respondents first hear about the Excellence Finland (n=31)

As can be seen on the here, the colleagues have been the most common channel to first hear about Excellence Finland among potential customers with 41,9% share. The second biggest result of the first contact was through Internet. Next, third biggest groups were heard of Excellence Finland through partners or from somewhere else with exactly the same percent share, 12,9% each. It was quite surprising, how Facebook was not the very first contact to anyone. Also, the first contact was made more often through friends or family rather than from the LaatuLehti-magazine or a customer meeting. The result also refer that colleagues first attracted the interest or recommended the services to search information about the company, for example, through internet.

The additional question revealed, where else did the respondent first hear about the company, if the answer was *Somewhere else, where?* One answered through a previous workplace, one from the current workplace. The very first contacts became also from a quality evaluation, while one respondent was evaluating something similar like Excellence Finland's quality evaluations. One answered the first contact was from over 20 years ago, while respondent worked as an evaluator at Suomen LaatuPalkinto (Finnish Quality rewards). Also, some answers revealed, that over the years the contacts with the company had been plenty, in different occasion. Further, is now requested of the respondents to estimate the knowing of the case company.



Figure 24: How well respondents estimate their knowing of Excellence Finland_potential (n=31)

There are similarities between the current and potential customers concerning this question of evaluation of the knowledge of the company. To first analyze replies of the potential ones, the exactly same percentage of 22,6% thought they knew the company *fairly well* or *well*. If we compare current customers with potential ones, the result was showing they knew the company well with a very close 25% share. Fairly well -sector was a bit higher with current ones, 38% share.

In comparison, it is quite surprising that 12,9% of the potential customers and only 5,9% of the current ones, knew the company very well. On the other hand, the quite similar result was gained for both groups regarding to some extent-sector potentials, 32,3% and current 28,0% share. The brand image is next evaluated.

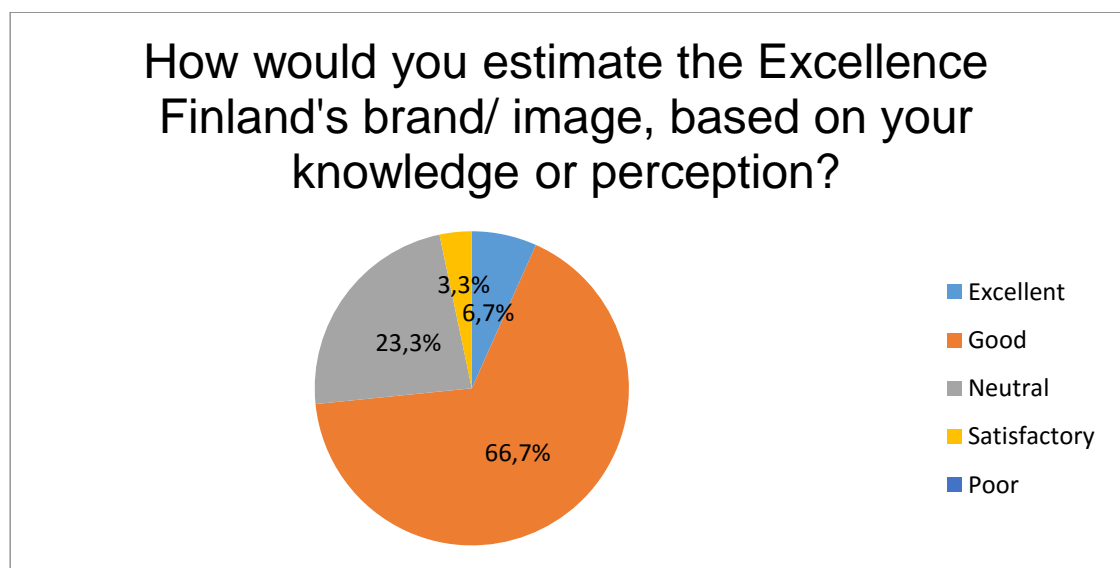


Figure 25: How well respondents estimate the brand /image of Excellence Finland (n=30)

The image or a brand of Excellence Finland was mostly estimated good with 20 replies and as high as 66,7/100%. This was a very positive signal and could tell there is potential to get these customers to coo-operate with the company in the future. However, relatively high 23,3% share was on neutral-sector. This could tell the current image is lame or does not wake up interest. Also, only 7% evaluated the brand or image excellent. Like the Table 5 shows, approximately 25% of the evaluation of the current image were neutral or even negative. It was described, for example, restrained, theoretical, conservative and official, plain or unseen. This result reveals, the current image could be a

bit elderly and needs some upgrading to modern times to meet potential customers' expectations. The *sales-oriented question* further asks, are the companies of the respondents using any business developing tools.

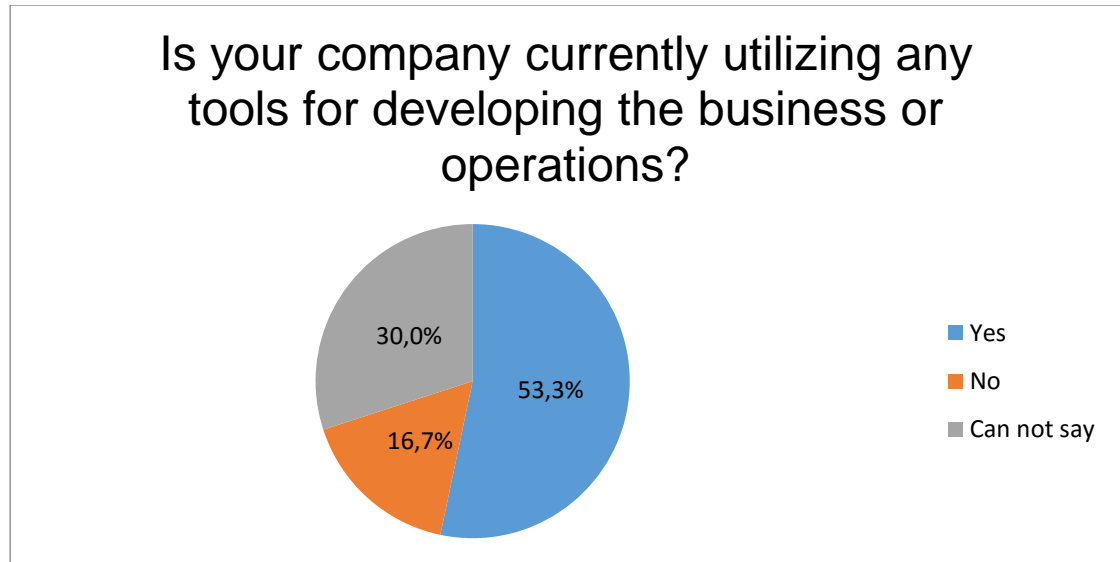


Figure 26: Current use of any tools to develop the business and operations in the company one represents (n=30)

First, it was quite surprising how many of the replies were in cannot say-sector, approximately 30%. This could tell, how badly the respondents know their operational or development matters in their own company. However, another factor might be, that some respondents do not work with these issues or simply are not part of the board of directors. But, this just does not explain everything, it can also be, that the CEO's or representatives have not shared this information with the employees. To conclude, the most important thing here is, however, to discover, that 53,3% *are* currently using some tools to develop their business, and those who could not say might be potential customers in the future, because they can be recommended the excellent tools Excellence Finland has to offer to improve the quality of their operations.

The additional question was to describe briefly, which tools are utilized in respondent's organization and how, if one answered yes on the previous question. It is notable, that each one of the 23 respondents, who said yes to the previous question, replied to this additional question as well. The replies are now presented in a table-form below.

Table 6: Which tools are utilized in the company of respondents and how (n=29)

Description	Mentions	Percentage
Self-assessment models, like EFQM model for SMEs or CAF and CAF training	6	21 %
Electronic system (HR system, Social media within the organization, competence sharing system)	3	10 %
Lean-principals, Lean-like management	2	7 %
Describing- and way of working processes	2	7 %
Reclamations, continuous improvement initiatives	2	7 %
Operating system Iso9001, ISO 17025	2	7 %
Audits, reviews	2	7 %
Benchmarking	1	3 %
Outside expertise per project	1	3 %
BSC Scorecard	1	3 %
Re-engineering	1	3 %
Green office	1	3 %
Great Place to Work	1	3 %
Systematic analysis of operations	1	3 %
Memory Jogger 2	1	3 %
Lessons learned	1	3 %
Experience feedback	1	3 %
TOTAL	29	100 %

One of the important aspects of this questionnaire was to discover, which tools are currently utilized and how, among potential customers. Most of the potential ones were already using EFQM- or CAF self-assessment tools. The EFQM Excellence model is used as a tool for evaluating and developing one's own business as well as CAF (Common Assessment Framework) is also a self-assessment model. The goal of these both self-assessment models is to gain an overall view of the organization's strengths and development areas. (Laatukeskus.fi)

In total 21%, were using some self-assessment tools already or they were going to use these models in the future. Some were going to use practical tools, such as quality indicators, lean-principals or *EFQM-model* for SMEs. One replied, the tools learned at the Excellence Finland's CAF training were utilized both in the CAF self-assessment and in the personnel survey poll.

Secondly, most of the respondents with 10% share were using several types of electronic systems, such as HR system, internal social media organization, knowledge sharing system and in addition, external knowledge of the matter for each project. *Benchmarking* is a comparative analysis and the learning occurs through comparing organizations with each other. This means comparing activities and processes with another organization. A comparator is generally sought in some respect for a better organization. Learning subjects can be selected from companies in the same field or from any industry (University of Eastern Finland). Altogether 10% of the total mentioned benchmarking, audits or reviews. Continuous improvement and auditing were seen the most important instruments of renewal and development. The feedback gathered from both internal and external customers and processes was used to develop processes. It was described, how benchmarking brings ideas from outside the company, how things can be done better and more wisely.

In turn, *Lessons Learned* is a project management tool, which can help to gain insights during one project. Therefore, this information can help any future projects and these insights can be usefully applied into new projects. In turn, *BSC Scorecard* is a resource management performance meter developed for the principles of goal management. *Memory Jogger 2*'s content was also utilized in evaluations and development among the respondents' organizations as well. In total, 9% of the total utilized already these tools in their own company, to name a few. The result shows exciting potential to offer Excellence Finland's services to these potential customers and clearly shows, the survey was sent to correct organizations, who already work or are planning to work with continuous improvement. Again, the question now requests the respondents to tell, if they develop their organization's processes.

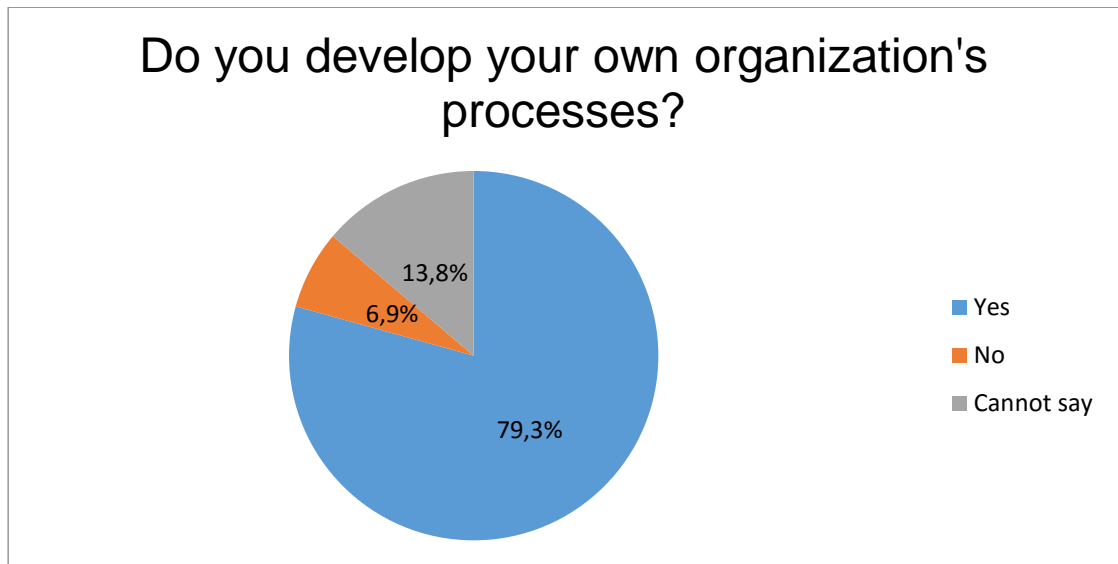


Figure 27: Are respondents developing their organization's processes (n=29)

In total 29 replies were received and most of the respondents were developing their own organization's processes, with 79,3% share. Approximately 14% could not say, meaning that they did not understand the question, or they are not sure whether they are personally involved in any current developing processes. To conclude, about 7% replied 'no' to this question.

Additional question was to briefly describe, what process development means in one's organization, if the answer on the previous question was positive. Quite many respondents impressed, how continuous improvement or activating the employee's own development thinking and ideas was the case. Also, a sensible development was experienced important, as well as focus on core processes. Another point of view was to develop processes and update them with the process experts, that is with the staff, driving by the project owner. The magnitude or significance of the process was also well noted, depending on the situation, the evolution takes place either by the company's development unit or by business venture. The experts were in some cases from different stakeholder- / industry sectors, both inside and outside the company. Some opinions were about activities, that are constantly changing, so the processes also live. In another organization, the development of processes aimed to influence process parameters so that the processes work optimally and produce the desired outputs efficiently. In practice, for example, updating machining values, enhancing the use of IT tools and deploying new tools.

Many replies were also concerning description of operations. One description was, how the phases of the operation are first described and defined in an efficient order, then the responsible persons are enrolled for the phases, and the details of the function next defined. Defining and describing processes was experienced in a way, that the doing was then more efficient, improving the quality and increasing the meaningfulness of the work. With the same resources, some felt more was now achieved and the quality improved.

Another way to operate was, that after the organization described the processes, the responsibility was transferred for the management. Processes were in such a way experienced developed and improved based on systematically collected information and documentation. In addition, description and definition of processes was the process development in one's organization, then development of services and stakeholder work and finally development of process indicators.

Planning, operative traversal and implementation was in some cases the way of process development. Also, the action was to make it visible. Also, in some cases the mapping of the current situation served as a basis for the design of development targets and the elaboration of a thorough plan.

Reviewing operations, and interfaces / dependencies of operations was also experienced important. In addition, identifying and systematically eliminating money jams and bottlenecks was mentioned.

Some respondents experienced there are lack of some process development matters within their organization, like linking control documents to processes or risk mapping was requested to be process-based. Additionally, in some cases, the current range of roles and responsibilities or determination of process owners needed clarification. *SOTE*-preparation of social and health care reform was also seen as challenging to the new social and health care companies, when they will change from the office-form into corporate-form and to the change of competitive situation. To conclude, in some cases, only updating guidelines yearly or seldom was the only way organization developed their processes. However, some organizations were already using Lean-management or adjusting Lean-principles, but some felt they needed improvement in development of process indicators.

This certainly open the possibility for Excellence Finland to sell their services to such organizations to develop their quality and processes.

The next figure defines the services namely and reveals the needs of potential customers more.

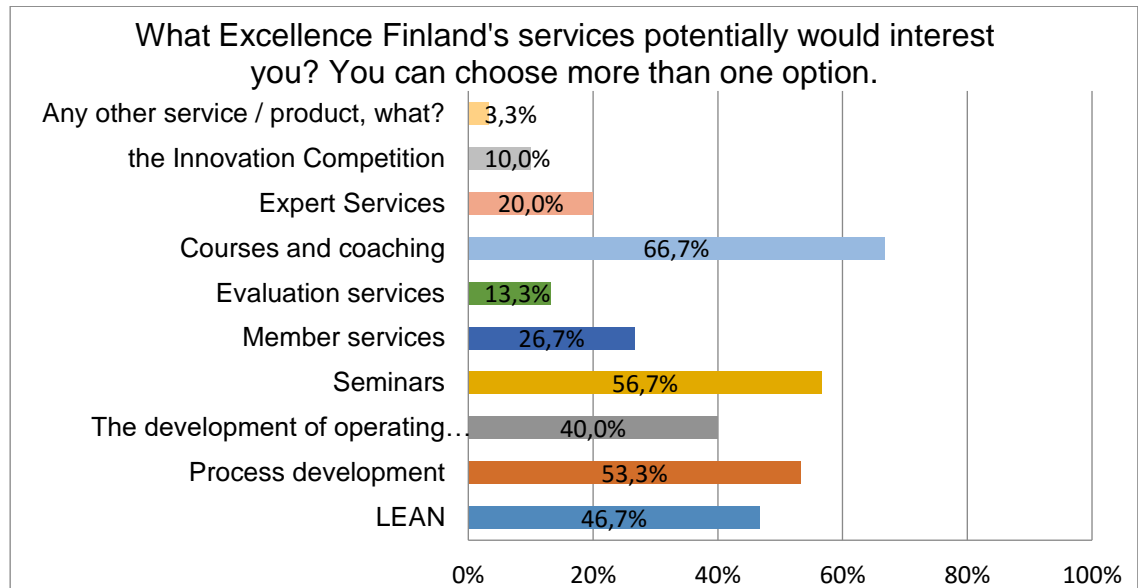


Figure 28: Which services of Excellence Finland potentially interest you (n=30)

This figure clearly shows, how the most popular services would be courses and coaching among potential customers. Seminars and process development are the next ones, that potentially interest this target group the most. In comparison, when asked the current customers which services they had used the most during last two years, seminars reached the highest share of 59,6%, LaatuLehti-magazine was second (47,4%) and then courses and coaching 43% share (Cf. figure 19).

LEAN and the development of operating system were both also very close with over 40% share of the replies. It is no surprise that process development and developing operating systems revealed such a great amount of replies, because referring to the previous question, over 79% are currently developing their organization's processes. In addition, approximately 3% of the respondents were interested in other services than listed here. For example, some were interested in free fact sheets such as EFQM-model presentation. This result is very encouraging and indicates explicitly the interests among this target group. Furthermore, the following question asks about the importance of personal advice.

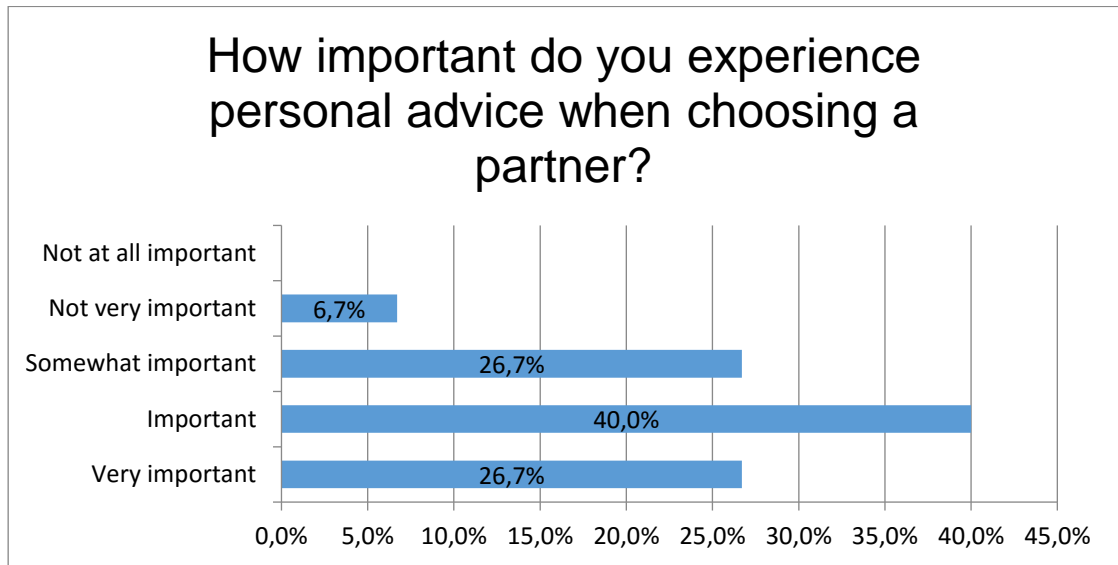


Figure 29: The importance of personal advice in choosing a partner (n=30)

When asked about the personal advice, when choosing a partner, most experienced it important. Very important or somewhat important replies were equal and only a few did not see it very important. This question was only addressed to this target group, to find out the importance of personal advice. For example, last year in 2016, EFQM Committed to Excellence- recognition was granted by Excellence Finland to Central Finland's Disability Service Foundation. Now, the EFQM is used by the Disabled Service Foundation (European Foundation for Quality Management) -model and thinking. It identifies the Foundation's strengths and development targets as well as measures the development towards excellence to identify the Foundation's strengths and development targets further measures the development towards excellence. The evaluation is thus mirrored on the objectives of the Foundation's activities and the result is to know, how effectively the strategy is implemented in practice. In addition, EFQM quality thinking is stated on behalf of this organization an excellent tool for a social organization service organization (Central Finland's Disability Service Foundation's Annual report 2016). To further analyze this, as the business sectors vary that much, to even up to the social sector, it is important to focus on each customer or potential customer with the help of personal advice and tailor the services to each one. The importance of technology is below evaluated.

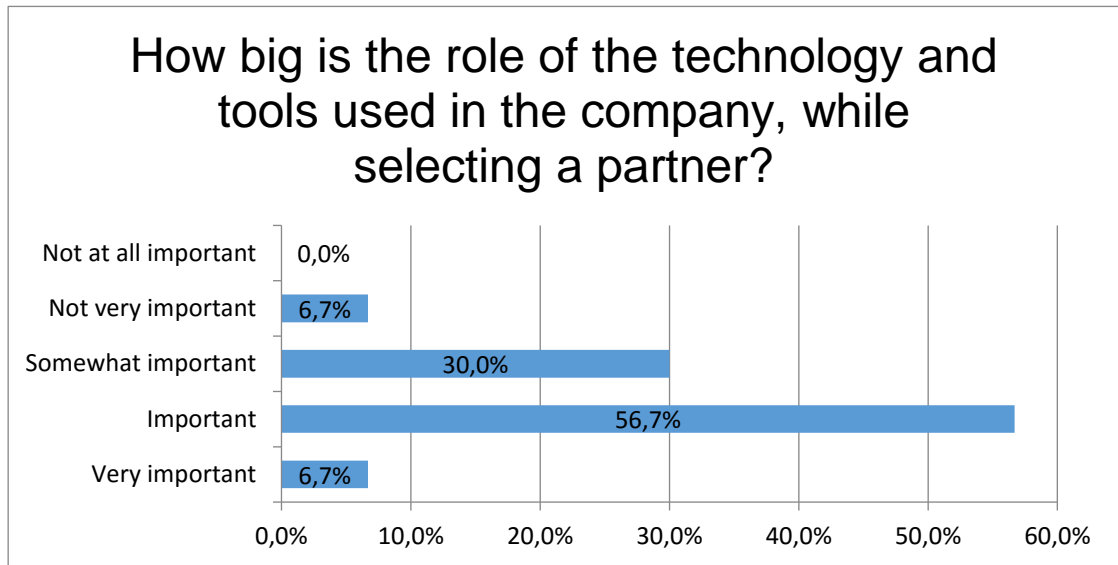


Figure 30: Importance of technology and tools used in the company in partner selection (n=30)

Over half of the replies confirmed the importance of technology and tools used in the company, while the potential customers base their selection criteria on selecting a partner. 30%/100 experienced the importance is somewhat important. It was quite surprising, how the same percent share was on them, who replied this was not very important or, who replied very important.

This question was selected here, because compatible technical skills and resources are the minimum requirements for partner selection. Additionally, the technical level should be analyzed for a potential partner and for your own business, and compared to what is the current and desired market position of the company. When choosing a technically and resource-compatible partner, both partners will be able to focus on their core competencies and can thus generate new ownership benefits. It was quite surprising, how the added value of technology and tools was not that much respected here, meaning so little replies were concerning this as very important aspect. The role of the costs is the following subject of the questionnaire.

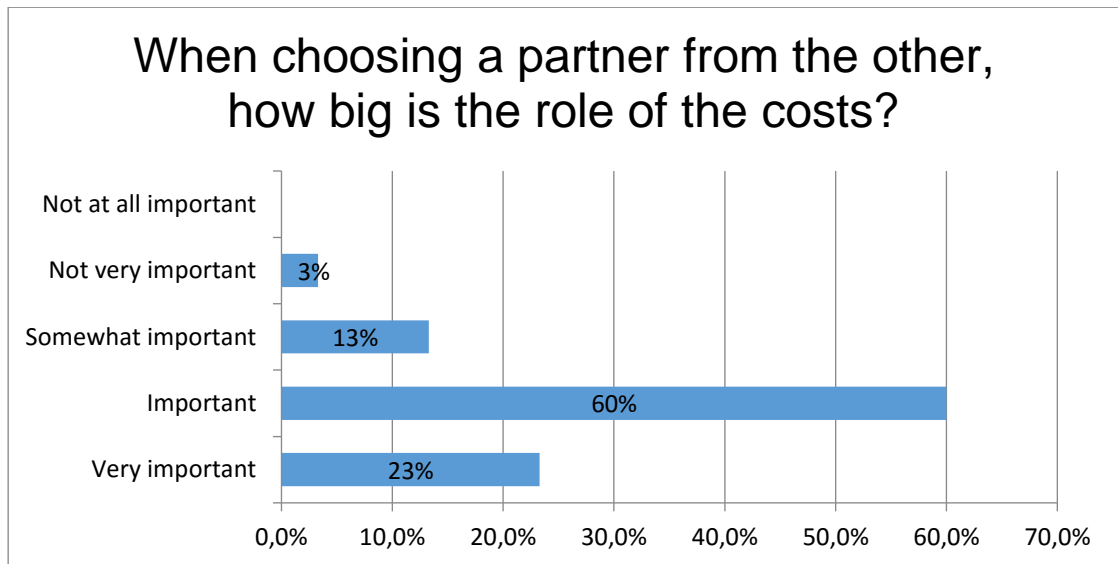


Figure 31: The role of the costs, when choosing a partner (n=30)

As to be expected, majority of the replies reveal, how costs were seen important. Like can be seen also in the Table 1, some of the current customers experienced the Excellence Finland expensive, about 2%. However, the percentage share is yet quite small. This figure clearly shows the importance of the cost-effective services and courses, seminars etc. among the potential customers. The *sales-oriented* question, would the respondents like to become a member of the case company is below.

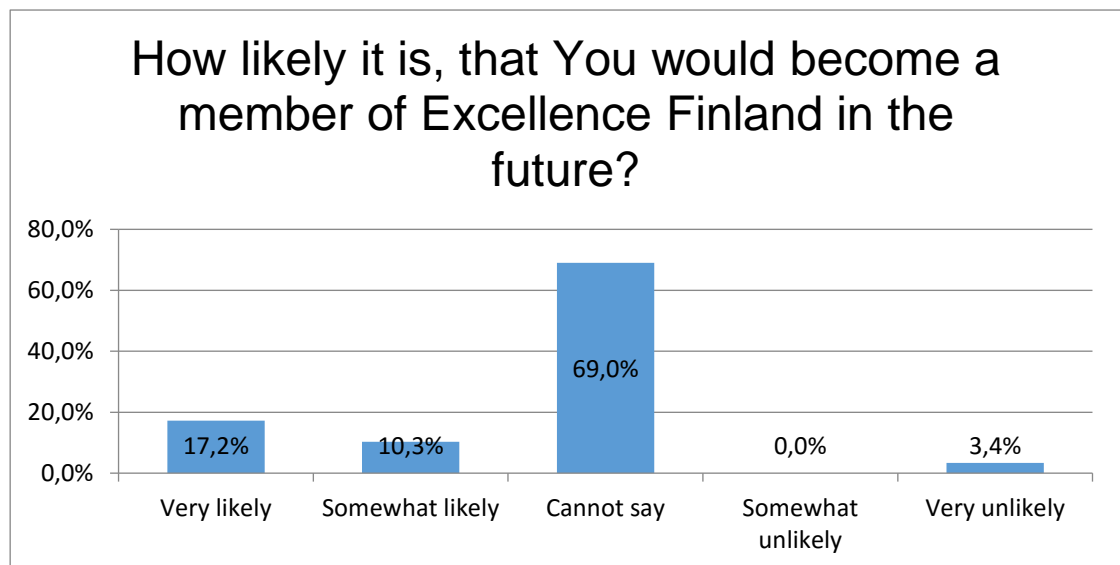


Figure 32: How likely would respondents become a member of the company (n=29)

This final question yielded majority of the respondents were not sure, whether they would like to become a member of the company or not in the future. However, about 28% would very likely or somewhat likely consider membership in

the future. The potential seems to exist, but Excellence Finland should concentrate on marketing their membership services to these potential customers.

6.3 International Partners

The international survey was sent to 66 partners and 6 replies were received. Approximate response rate was 9,09%. This result is very low, so all the following replies could be analysed as a sampling distribution. Anyway, this percentage share was quite expected and high enough to be added as part of the study and gives the international aspect to the survey.

Majority of respondents were men likewise with the current customers. In comparison, potential customers' replies were mostly from female. Men responding to the questionnaire of international partners were approximately 83,3% and female 16,7%. Although, most the respondents were working in the Senior or Middle Management, the age distribution was evenly distributed between 55-64, 45-54 and 35-44 age groups with 33,3%. It is a good sign, how the age and duties are distributed quite extensively. In other target groups, the age was distributed more unevenly. However, if there were more respondents in the target group, gender and age differences could have been more diverse. The first question of the survey for the international partners was to estimate, how well they know Excellence Finland.

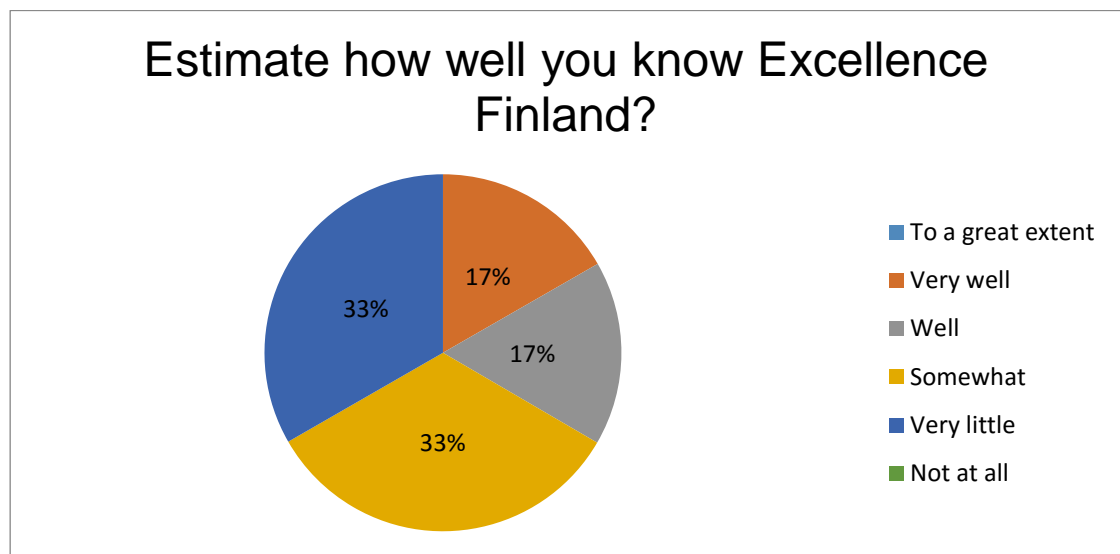


Figure 33: How well respondents estimate their knowing of Excellence Finland_international (n=6)

The result is quite interesting, because none of the respondents knew the company to 'a great extent', and 66% of the respondents knew 'somewhat' or 'very little' about the company. However, altogether 33% knew the company 'very well' or 'well'. This is something to work within the company, the partners could know better Excellence Finland. The image is evaluated in the following question.

Table 7: How to describe the image of Excellence Finland with 3 free choice adjectives (n=6)

Classifieds open answers	Mentions	Percentage
Active, dynamic, fresh, modern, impressive, visible	6	35 %
Collaborative, open, supportive	3	18 %
Slow, inflexible, serious	3	18 %
Advanced	2	12 %
Good	1	6 %
Trustworthy	1	6 %
Well known	1	6 %
TOTAL	17	100 %

The second question was to describe the image of Excellence Finland in an open-ended question form. The respondents were asked to use three adjectives, free of choice. International partners mostly think, that the company is active, dynamic, fresh, modern, impressive and, also visible. It is very encouraging, that so many mentions were this positive. Secondly, cooperation skills likewise open and supportive atmosphere were mentioned. However, the same amount of mentions, were also given to slow, inflexible and serious. This is something that has been mentioned also on behalf of the potential customers as well as current customers. There is room now to analyse, how this is so and what to do within the company regarding personnel or operations to improve the current situation. *Advanced* was mentioned 2 times, so that gives the image, that respondents feel the company advanced or developing in operations. This is also a very positive sign. In addition, trustworthy and well known were mentioned once each, meaning 12% of the total. The third question was concerning, how the respondents were introduced or How the respondents first hear about Excellence Finland_international in the first place.

Table 8: How the respondents first hear about Excellence Finland_international (n=6)

Classifieds open answers	Mentions	Percentage
EOQ (European Organization for Quality) meetings or congresses	4	57 %
EFQM meetings	2	29 %
From colleagues	1	14 %
TOTAL	7	100 %

Mostly, acquaintance was made on EOQ or ETQM meetings or congresses (European Organization for Quality). One answer, approximately 14% of the answers, was from colleagues. Current customers likewise first hear about the company from colleagues with 11,8% share. Also, in comparison, current customers' answers were only 1,4% related to EFQM training or current work was related to the EFQM model. Excellence Finland is a key member of EOQ, and its purpose is to monitor trends in European quality work. EFQM in turn is an abridgment of the European Foundation for Quality Management. Excellence Finland is a national partner of EFQM and promotes the use of systematic development tools likewise participates in developing Excellence models (www.laatukeskus.fi)

The media channels were next evaluated. In other words, the respondent was to evaluate, how they follow the Excellence Finland's media channels.

The multiple-choice question was rated in the scale of 1-5 (1=not at all, 2=rarely, 3=sometimes, 4=often, 5=many times per week, 6=daily).

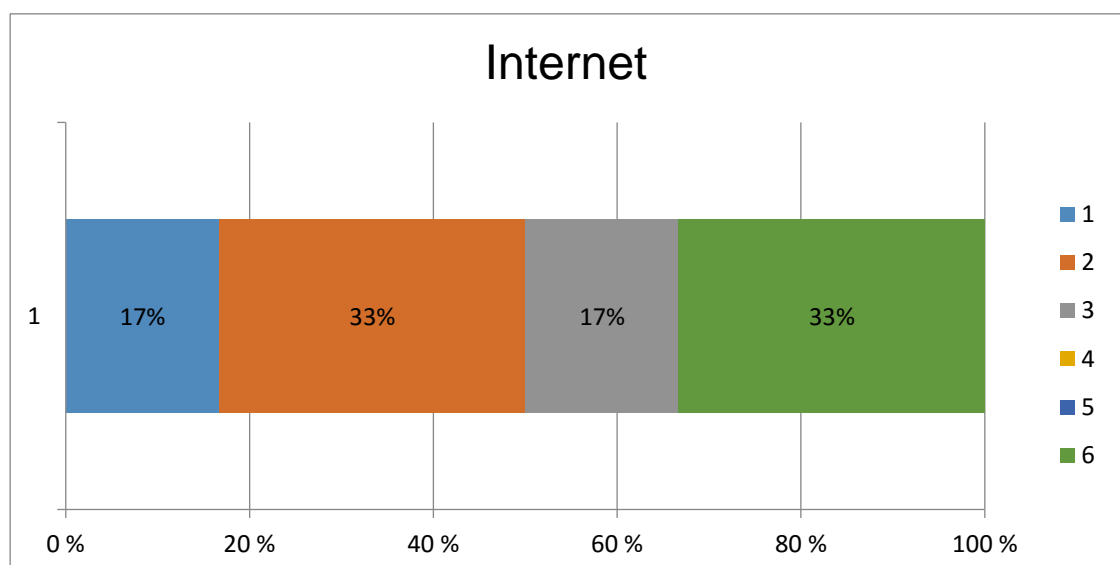
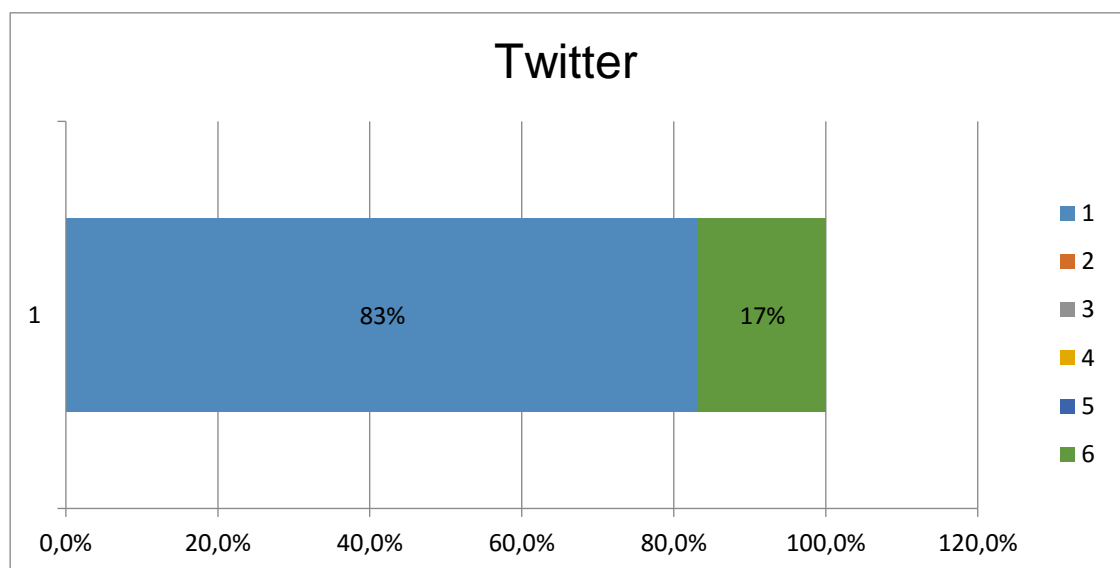
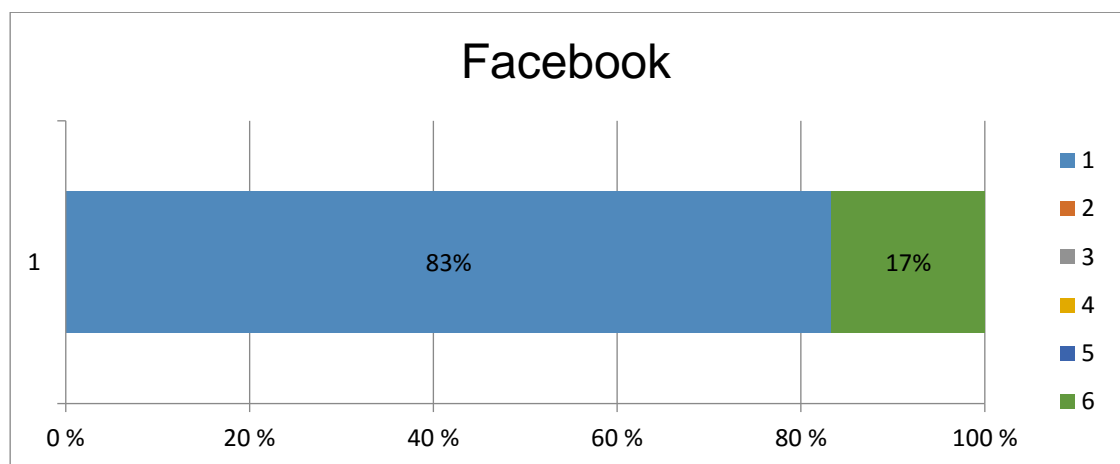


Figure 34/1: How respondents follow Excellence Finland's media channels_international: Internet (n=6), Facebook (n=6), Twitter (n=6), LinkedIn (n=6), Something else, which? (n=3)

Regarding the Internet, most respondents follow Internet rarely, or daily with 33% share as well as 17% follow it sometimes or not at all. This range is quite variable, perhaps Excellence Finland should advertise more their internet-pages to their international partners or make them more visible, as it is already to the current customers. One reason to this result of 'not at all' and 'some-times' may be, that the webpage is a bit confusing and the English version is very limited. You can click the English version in the right corner in the front page of www.laatukeskus.fi, but the menu in the left remains in Finnish. Also, when you try to click more information, it is not possible in English. Only one page of introduction of Excellence Finland's operations is currently available in English. Again, the rest of the media channels will be analysed next.



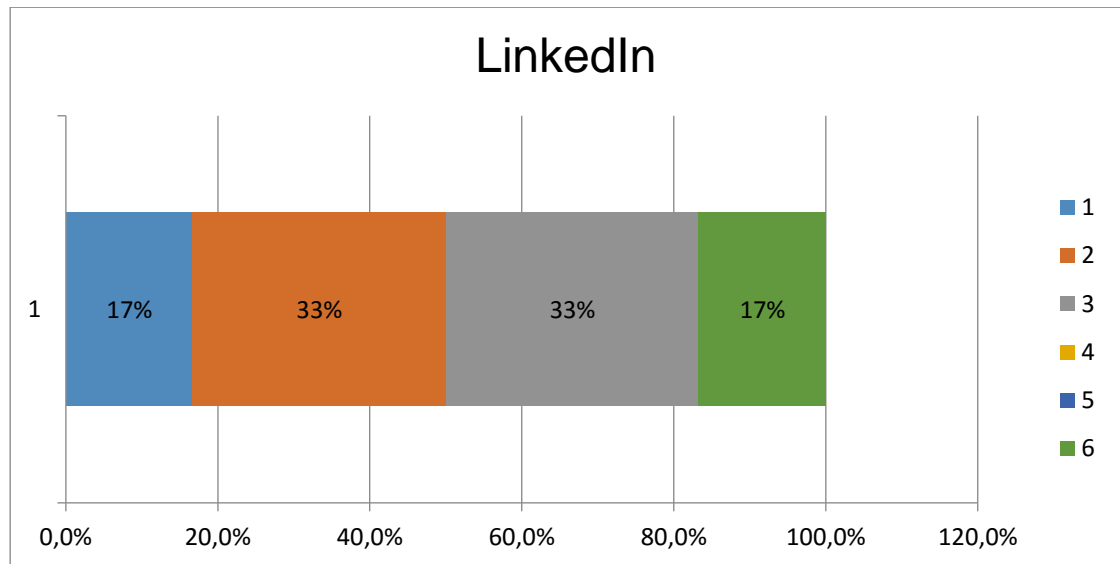


Figure 34/2: How respondents follow Excellence Finland's media channels_international: Facebook (n=6), Twitter (n=6) LinkedIn (n=6)

Facebook and Twitter were not followed at all the same percentages of 83%. However, 17% followed it daily. The result may be such, because there is not an English version of Twitter or Facebook-pages of Excellence Finland. Instead, LinkedIn-pages of the company were followed by the international partners quite well, since the result revealed they follow it sometimes (33%), however, the same percent share was on rarely. In addition, 17% followed LinkedIn daily, which is exactly same result as on Facebook and Twitter. Perhaps, Excellence Finland should translate more texts in English on their Twitter or Facebook-pages or simply create English versions of them.

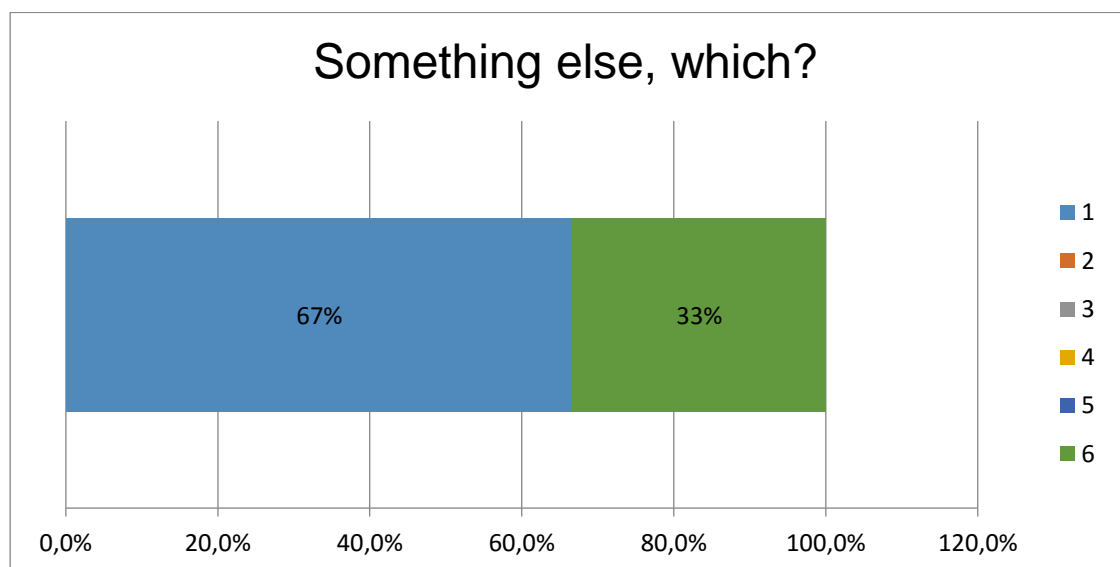


Figure 34/3: How respondents follow Excellence Finland's media channels_international: Something else, which? (n=3)

Most of the respondents did not follow any other media channels than the mentioned ones. However, 33% of the replies showed that some other media channel is being followed daily. *Survey Pal* once again failed to put the extra explanation on which channel is this something else. To conclude, Internet pages of the Excellence Finland were the most followed media channel among this target group, so the main concern should be in the development of them, perhaps translating more content in English and thus become more international player. The media visibility level is asked in the following.

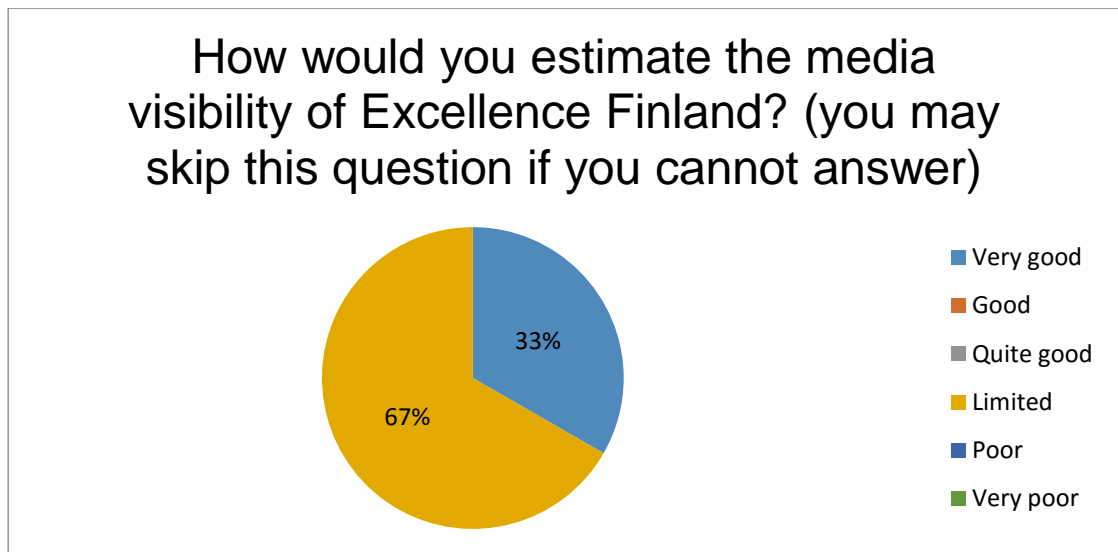


Figure 35: Evaluation of Laatukskus media visibility_international (n=3)

This question was replied only by 3 respondents, which means that 50% skipped this question. Once again, this is a lack of *Survey Pal*, that it allows to skip questions. However, the media visibility was considered mostly limited with 67%, and no one thought the current media visibility is very good, good or even quite good. This is quite concerning result and hardly is not an expected result. Likewise, no one considered the media visibility very good in the current customers group either. However, this latter group gained at least 8% of the total replies in the 'good'-sector and 38% in the 'quite good'-sector. But, to conclude, it is also very notable how the rest 33% of the international partners felt the media visibility was estimated very good. In the end, this Figure 35 shows, that there is room for development in this sector of media visibility, in both target groups, to reach more replies to a 'very good'- or 'good'-sector, but partly the results are encouraging. The following reveals, whether the respondents have cooperated with their partner within recent two years, this is a *sales-oriented* question.

Have you cooperated with Excellence Finland within recent two years?

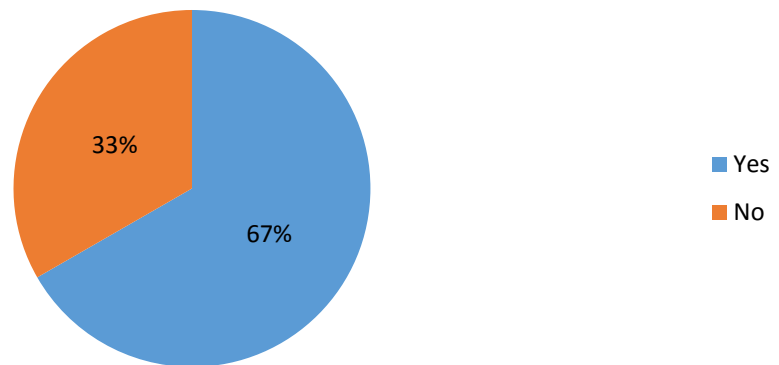


Figure 36: Cooperation with Excellence Finland within two years, yes or no (n=6)

This question reveals how 67% of the respondents had some cooperation with Excellence Finland within recent two years, and 33% did not. This could tell, that those who answered 'no', may not be that active in cooperation or, the connection has been lost for two or few years. There seems to be improvement opportunity to keep contact to those organizations more often in the future. However, the additional question revealed that every one of those who answered 'no', considered the cooperation could be useful in the future.

Another additional question was concerning, whether the respondents felt the cooperation was useful to their organization, if they answered yes. Each one answered in a positive mood and experienced the cooperation was useful, professional, very open, positive likewise the organizational skills were evaluated as good. The trustworthiness is again asked from this target group.

Do you think Excellence Finland is a trustworthy organization?

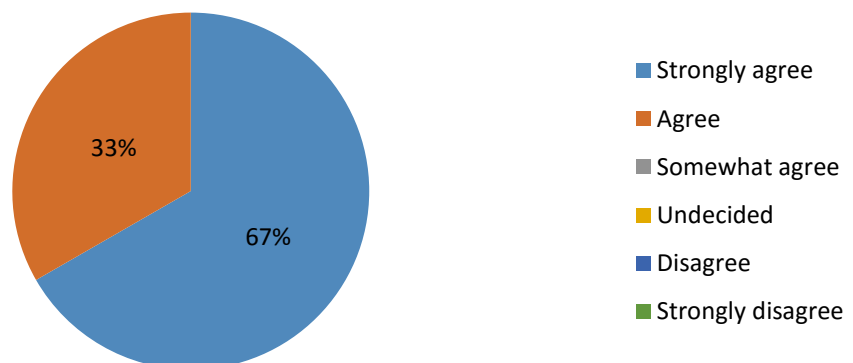


Figure 37: Trustworthiness of Excellence Finland_International (n=6)

The same question was presented to the current customers as well, and the comparison to the other groups is there analyzed further. However, the result here clearly shows, how the international partners have high trust on Excellence Finland. The next question further requests to tell, what kind of operator the case company is.



Figure 38: How the Excellence Finland is currently experienced as an operator (n=6)

As to be expected, the most replies evaluated Excellence Finland trustful, impressive and a modern operator. In addition, honest and old fashioned showed the same support. Once again, to conclude, the operator is yet very trustful, but also at the same time needs update for not being old fashioned operator.

Next question was an open-ended question, how to develop the corporate image of Excellence Finland. Two replies occurred, meaning approximately 33% of the total amount of respondents. At first, yearly online report about main activities, at least for international stakeholders was requested. Secondly, the brand strengthening was suggested by getting support from the state. These are good opinions, and it is the Excellence Finland's decision, whether they will apply these suggestions in the future or not. The *sales-oriented* question of the future purchases is presented below.

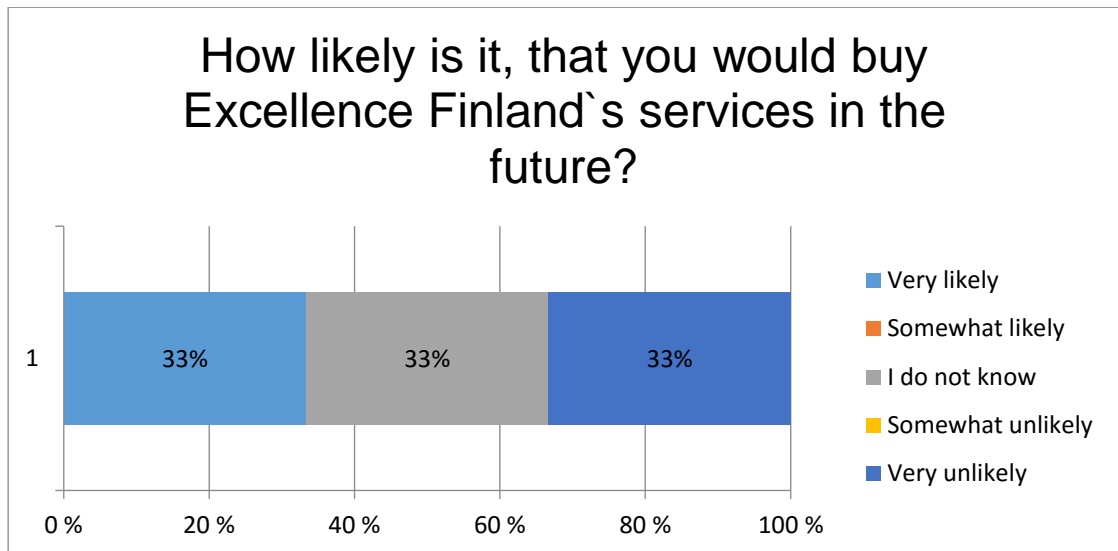


Figure 38: How likely would the respondents buy the services of Excellence Finland in the future (n=6)

Quite surprisingly, all the answers were evenly divided. The most encouraging is the one third would very likely buy the services in the future, but 66% were not sure or even would very unlikely buy them in the future. This is partly not the expected result and needs analyses within the company, what could be done better.

The last questions reveal the position of the partners, who responded to this questionnaire.

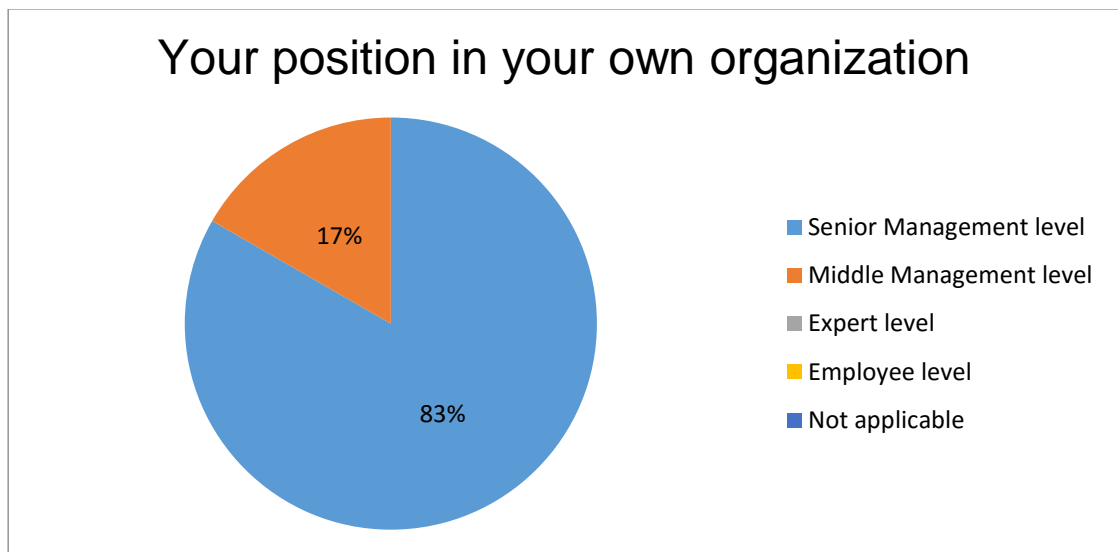


Figure 40: Position of the respondents in their own company_international (n=6)

When it comes to the position of the respondents in their own companies, majority of them were working in the Senior Management level, with 83%. The second group was in the Middle Management with 17% share. The same

question was presented to the current ones as well, and the result was Expert level (44%) and second highest in the Middle Management (29%) and thirdly Senior Management level with 21% share. Like earlier mentioned, the Expert level is also important group, because on that level is usually the most practical experience of the company processes and suggestions on how to develop them is very concrete. In that case, it is regrettable, that no answers were from this level in this target group.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The central objective of this thesis was to discover, to what extent the key corporate customers and international partners likewise potential customers know Excellence Finland (brand awareness) and what kind of perceptions of Excellence Finland's brand are reflected in the memory of target groups and stakeholders (brand image). The research question based on the information gained through the online questionnaires was to find out, how to develop the current brand image. The online questionnaires were divided into three sections of brand recognition, brand image and sales-oriented questions.

The empirical data was supported by the relevant literature review to determine the dimensions of brand awareness and brand image and related terms and how they are linked together. The research sought to accomplish this by reviewing previous studies, pondering the content of the main terms and corresponding terms from a multidimensional perspective, and using semi-structured and structured questions and analytical concepts in a versatile empirical study.

The main conclusions to be deduced based on the results of all the three questionnaires is, that overall Excellence Finland's recognizability is not quite at the expected level and the respondents mostly know the company *fairly well* or to *some extent* and actually among the international partners even lower, on *somewhat* or *very little* -level. This result shows, how the proper corporate image of the company among all the target groups has not yet been born and for the international partners a company remains quite elusive.

In turn, the closer look and examination of the results nevertheless revealed the current brand image was very positive or good likewise very few individuals made negative evaluations or comments. However, some negative comments existed and revealed developmental challenges to develop the brand image into more visible, modern, faster, colorful, interesting as well as less theoretical and conservative direction. Also, the company was more seen as domestic player rather than international.

This demonstrates the communication efforts of Excellence Finland are good in quality and those who saw the brand image in a negative light still believe the brand image is developable. However, if the company wants to be seen more as an international player, the suggestion of the author is to start promoting this more and develop the international web-pages or other communication or networking channels to be more international. One thing is to consider the name “*Laatukeskus*” changed to something else, which may be more describing the company values of excellence, cooperation, integrity and welfare. Especially cooperation in network building is noteworthy to develop and to keep more contact with current customers likewise international partners.

These suggestions are supported by the earlier literature, for example Meenahgan (1995) states, how advertising is at the center of brand image development, because it can inform the functional capabilities of the brand itself. Also at the same time, it motivates the brand with symbolic values or meanings, which should be relevant to the customers. These two functions of advertising closely parallel the informational and transformational schools of advertising effects and theories on the central and peripheral routes to consumer persuasion.

In those target groups that know the company *fairly well*, the brand image is quite positive, and the developmental recommendations are mainly based on visibility, how to increase it and not that much on communication, how to redesign that. Although, few of the respondents did suggest additional power or investment in communication and marketing.

The recognizability of the company did not reveal any major problems and Excellence Finland is mostly experienced trustworthy and professional in its own

field. However, the developmental suggestions could potentially benefit the case company remarkably in the objective of developing recognizability of the corporate brand and brand image. Also, there exist great potentials in the new customer or member field to build cooperation, especially courses and training approved to be the most important channels. Also, most of these potential customers were already developing their own organization's processes, which opens wonderful opportunity to offer Excellence Finland's services to them in the future.

7.1 Managerial implications

Further to more detailed suggestions, based on the findings of the questionnaires, the following is targeted to the case company and its management.

1. Better media visibility and use of Internet and other social media channels

Since it was established that media visibility was mainly limited and how Internet was the most followed media channel, major efforts should be utilizing it to improve recognizability and brand awareness. For example, the English version of the current webpage is currently very limited and could be developed to offer more information of the company in English. The Internet-pages could also include mantras or stories, how the story of Laatukeskus, Excellence Finland started, more history and person-related storytelling.

In addition, the front page of the homepage is very confusing, and there is too much information. Perhaps, to simplify it is to make pictures bigger and less articles and links etc. Also, colors could be just a few, not that many as now, but brighter colors. Again, to develop it further, there could be more informative videos. For example, the "Rent a Quality Manager" here:

<http://www.laatukeskus.fi/suomen-laatuhydistys/vuokraa-laatupaallikko> is quite boring. More effective could be a video or videos presenting the persons or videos about the personnel or the premises could be modern and informative, than just text and pictures. Personal videos, for example interview of a customer or an employee could be functional and beneficial to develop brand

identity, and the author would recommend videos also including texts. Although it was very positive, how many *Youtube.com*-videos were found made by Excellence Finland, there are not that much visitors, likes or followers on the Laatukskus Facebook-pages. One development hint is to add commercials on the Facebook-pages of the current customers or partners, that would lead to Laatukskus site by clicking. Other suggestion is to add messenger box, which appears each time, someone visits the site, like "*Laatukskus is now active, please start a conversation*".

The potential through social media platforms is considerable and should be taken seriously, since it potentially reaches very many people. However, company's *Twitter*-account is nowadays more active as well as *Linkedin.com* - posts have been increasing during the last year.

2. Build a brand identity with stories, for example, an expert blog

People love stories, it would be interesting to know, how the Excellence Finland was started and some history about the company. Illustrative pictures and important milestones could help to see the development of the company to its current mode. The story could include the values, why Excellence Finland is better than its competitors and which makes it special, and competitive in the market-sector. For example, company blog is an informative way to give 'personal touch' to the stakeholders or potential customers. In turn, it is a positive sign, how Laatukskus, Excellence Finland has already stated a monthly blog for the senior position experts here: <http://laatuseniorit.blogspot.com/> This "*Quality senior*" ("Laatuseniorit") -division promotes cooperation, professionalism and exchange of experience between members. (Laatukskus.fi.) However, this development could be taken further to write other blogs as well. If we consider potential customers, they need basic information about the services company can offer and which benefits they could get compared to the competitors.

People could also enjoy reading the inside stories, like what kind of work personnel do there and what is the role of each one for example in this brand re-

newal-project. The goal could be two articles per week. These blogs could replace the advertisement now on the main webpage, which is in its current mode a bit confusing and provides too much information with too little fonts.

3. Cooperation and increasing collaboration with university students or organizations

The collaboration for example with the KARVI (national education assessment center) is one option, like earlier suggested. However, another option would be to offer Excellence Finland recruitment services, such as Laatukeskus, Excellence Finland as an employer. Such opportunity does not currently exist, and this could be a link in the front Internet page. For example, Trainee programs offer university students opportunity to gain excellent work experience in quality matters or presentation skills or marketing future management tools to companies. However, it is great to discover, how in 2016 Laurea University cooperation with Excellence Finland was started with Lean Management training. But, to develop further recruitment services, the case company could offer practical training period or thesis projects to university students who need or included in their studies.

4. More meaningful dialogue with the customers and more versatile and tailored events

Based on the results of the survey, the quality of the events, courses and speakers varied occasionally. The meaningful and in advance thought dialogue with the customers could help to build more effective events, which should be tailored more carefully in the future. The customer needs and guidance should also be more concrete and precise, and the topics of the events should be fulfilled better. The events must be less marketing-oriented and the contacts on behalf of the case company should be more proactive towards their stakeholders and done more frequently. This applies also towards the international partners. The conversations could be linked to the earlier meetings or events the customers participated in, and further ask, how they have managed to develop their operations with the tools given by Excellence Finland. In

addition, they might need help with some other things like employee satisfaction. The contact could be made by phone or email. Perhaps this could also mean additional power on marketing and communications and better advertisement on events.

7.2 The theoretical part of the study

The theoretical part began with discussion on brand as a phenomenon based on previous studies. Based on the literature, brand was claimed to enter a phase of inexorable decline, and the roles of brands are more complex, pervasive as well as multifaceted, which take into consideration social criticism and public opinion. However, to face competitors, being ethical was the new axiom where individual values are important to achieve economic aims and unique brands should pursue new aims linked to these values. Therefore, Excellence Finland could rethink the very nature of their brand, the emotional, mental and spiritual vision, which are more important than the material image and its being.

Next, the different approach to multidimensional brand awareness were discussed and the selected dimensions were presented which were used in this study. These were brand recognition and BAV (Brand Asset Valuator). Brand awareness is also a basic dimension of brand equity, meaning that a brand has no equity unless the consumer is at least aware of the brand. Therefore, the model of Keller's Brand Equity Model was presented as well as a Customer-based Brand Equity Framework Model and Y&R Brand Asset Valuator -model related to the other term of brand recognition.

In the second part of the literature view the concept of brand image was introduced, which was the main chapter of this research. However, brand awareness is linked to the brand image and a sufficient level of brand awareness must be first created, before marketers can put more emphasis on crafting a brand image.

One interesting point the case company could utilize is, that if the metaphor of the brand is used as personality. For example, a manifest through a celebrity in brand advertisements may help customers to find the company easier.

Then, it would be to appreciate the emotional values of the brand. Again, the brand experience is highly involved in the brand image and four different experiences dimensions were presented.

In the third part of the study the case company was presented, and it was discovered that currently it has over 500 Finnish members namely private- and public-sector organization and thousands of business developers and opinion leaders are actively participating in the activities of the corporation. Also, the company structure was presented in this chapter.

7.3 Conclusions, current customers

The conclusion of the brand awareness is, that the current customers know the company *fairly well* or to *some extent* (over 60% in total). Additionally, very few know the company very well or almost the same amount, poorly. This is presumably not the expected result. However, the company services are in comparison quite well known, such as seminars, Laatulehti-magazine etc.

The brand image of Excellence Finland is mostly experienced reliable, businesslike, well-established, permanent, professional and expert in its own field. Also, quality-orientation and quality-awareness are well recognized, and the case company is considered a high-quality company. However, the brand image is also hoped to be more visible, international, modern and fresh. Some (about 5%) also experience the brand image is boring, unsurprising, lame, passive and colorless etc. likewise the company name (in Finnish) *Laatukeskus* is old-fashioned.

The brand image is mostly considered *good* (with 49%), but only 7,4 % respondents gave the excellent evaluation. This result reveals, that the brand image is not currently that clear among the current customers. In turn, almost the same amount, of over 40% think the current brand image is weak, satisfactory or neutral. This is considerable and should be developed further, how to increase the brand awareness and the knowledge towards a clear and understandable brand image. However, the company itself is mostly experi-

enced, with 78% percentage share, a trustworthy organization. But it is notable that those who rated somewhat agree, undecided or disagree, shows the percentage share of 22%, which is rather high.

The most followed media channel among the current customers is *Laatulehti*-magazine, which is followed even on the daily basis. However, the media visibility is experienced limited, since about 44% of the respondents think that way. In comparison, among international partners the percentage share of like-minded is even greater, 67%. This means, the future brand strategy should include development of media visibility and company visibility in general. Very good advices were given, for example increasing media visibility with television and writing articles in traditional magazines or newspapers. All services of the company are in use 'fairly evenly', but mostly *Laatulehti*-magazine, seminars and courses and coaching.

Event implementation and its usefulness is currently at excellent level, which is great. The most mentions concerned the professional lecturers, expert coaches and the events offered innovative ideas and -perspectives, as well as insights into ones' own work. Moreover, the events were in addition mostly experienced inspirational, energetic, topical, well organized and reliable. Furthermore, praise was given to comprehensive presentations from various industries. However, feedback was also given about too marketing-oriented events. Excellence Finland should ask from time to time, how their members are doing and refer to the latest meeting or a subject discussed. Also, the attendees may need more concrete point on the topic, not just marketing of which course can develop more that expertise.

In addition, 3% or under feel that some events need more attendees or exhibitors were dull (for example "The annual Quality Day 2015"), occasionally performers have been too technical and some think, there was not enough time to ensure that all the participating students learn. Some also experience that the content should be more versatile on events or member services may receive too little information, even in member divisions. Additionally, some think that the content depends greatly on the lecturers and some events have been slightly different from the advertised.

Again, prices are experienced competitive with other suppliers, but often high compared to the benefits. The price reduction should thus be considered concerning the seminars, coaching and events. Perhaps some events should be arranged elsewhere than just in Helsinki area, for example, in the Eastern Finland.

The research question of "*How to develop brand image*" must have been the most interesting and important question of all. Like already mentioned, this study revealed, that among this target group Excellence Finland is not visible enough on national or traditional medias, for example the content of *Laatu-lehti*-magazine was hoped to be stronger, meaningful and more involved. It was in addition claimed, that big audiences do not even know the company exists. The development ideas considering visibility included examples of writing articles in traditional magazines and newspapers.

The people and speakers were seen "grey" to some, which could mean boring or colorless personalities or styles of speeches. Quite many also wished that younger people would be involved in the activities of the company. Some felt, that too little information about the trainings were given. The course and training prices were suggested to "come in modern times" and some felt the prices are now "in the clouds". Some felt, that there is "too much fuss" in small circles and separate, when Excellence Finland could combine and use the country's best resources for the benefit of those in need.

The increasing brand awareness was additionally experienced important, with 3,6% share. For example, presentation round at the decision-making members or a visible role through the 'Quality days' (Laatupäivät) also means the national media to some. One suggested purchased STT news coverage for Quality award (Laatupalkinto) -recipients. Also, development ideas were presented on organizing events also in provinces, not just in Helsinki.

When it comes to international brand image, also 3,6% of the respondents thought it was unclear or missing and the obsolescent image was hoped to divert into younger, modern, exiting, dynamic, innovative and extensive direction. Moreover, the graphic design was one additional thing to develop as well,

possibly more colors – updating to this day. The brand image was recommended to regenerate into agile and less formal external direction. Some well-noted, that "Quality" is a challenging term, because it is associated with virtually everything within a company or organization. Some thought the name '*Quality Center /Laatukeskus*' is not responsible for the content of the current activity. One suggestion for a new name was presented as *Productivity Center*. Another option for a small seminar name was '*Q-Prof*'. In addition, many thought that the focus and mission is still unclear, and more stories were hoped, because the concept of quality was experienced awkward to some. Perhaps the Brand Storybook could help with this.

The courses tailored to customer needs was as well wished. One suggested, how he/she would change the courses to be interesting by increasing the speed, customer focus, and resolution. Also, one would emphasize tailor-made (multidimensional) courses and top expertise in the field of customer needs. In addition, Excellence Finland could promise the quality guarantee and the price would depend on the results and customer satisfaction. Also, it was noted how the development should focus on the opening of quality-jargon and the 'quality-believers' should come to the real world. The development of the brand image should in addition be linked to doing something that genuinely helps companies and organizations.

Further, Excellence Finland was felt it lacks the courage to question its own work. Some mentioned, that they are not looking for the latest information from the company. Suggestions were to renew the brand image in such a way that the Excellence Finland would be considered as a primary source when looking for modern management methods and for future-oriented management methods and leading to the improvement of productivity through high-quality, cost-effective tools.

To conclude, stylishness was experienced good and to be maintained, as well as reliability and expertise. However, the Excellence was advised to focus more on the right quality, meaning a broad concept of quality, not seeking market excellence, but beneficial promotion of the right quality. The angle should be more of a quality expert organization whose expertise sells itself.

The Excellence Finland must come to people and not as they now assume that people come to them.

In total 60,5% would very likely or somewhat likely buy the services in the future, although quite a few did not know, what to answer. Also, most respondents would recommend the services of the company in the future, in total very likely or somewhat likely opinions were approximately 71,2%, which is a great result. However, again quite high percentage did not know what to answer. This result may reveal, that the company should provide more information of the services, consider price reduction and add customer meetings.

7.4 Conclusions, potential customers

Potential customers considered Excellence Finland as professional and skilled likewise high-quality service provider and they were aware, it is a non-profit association. The company was also experienced effective, inspiring, active and rich of ideas. These are very positive signals, and shows the brand awareness is quite good in general. However, Excellence Finland should consider, how to increase the visibility and renew the image to become more modern and less plain for the potential customers. The most common channel to first hear about the company was through the colleagues. The result also revealed that colleagues first attracted the interest or recommended the services to search information about the company, for example, through Internet. The Excellence Finland was mostly known among this target group *fairly well* or well. In comparison, current customers knew the company well with a very close percentage share of 25%.

The brand image was mostly evaluated good, and only approximately 7% evaluated it excellent. However, this was a very positive signal and could tell there is potential to get these customers to co-operate with the company in the future. Again, some (over 20%) thought the current image is lame or does not wake up interest. The results reveal, the current image could be a bit elderly and needs some upgrading to modern times to meet potential customers' expectations.

One of the important aspects of this questionnaire related to the potential customers was to discover, which tools are currently utilized and how, among potential customers. Most of the potential ones were already using EFQM- or CAF self-assessment tools and most of the respondents were developing their own organization's processes. Quite many respondents expressed, how continuous improvement or activating the employee's own development thinking and ideas was the most important thing. Also, a sensible development was experienced important, as well as focus on core processes. Another point of view was to develop processes and update them with the process experts, that is with the staff, driven by the project owner. To conclude, in some cases, only updating guidelines yearly or seldom was the only way organization developed their processes. However, some organizations were already using Lean-management or adjusting Lean-principles, but some felt they needed improvement in development of process indicators. This certainly open the possibility for Excellence Finland to sell their services to such organizations to develop their quality and processes. (See more on Survey results).

The most popular services of the case company revealed to be courses and coaching. Seminars and process development were the next ones, that potentially interest this target group the most. LEAN and the development of operating system were both also very close with over 40% share of the replies. When asked about the personal advice, when choosing a partner, most experienced it important. Very important or somewhat important replies were equal and only a few did not see it very important. This question was only addressed to this target group, to find out the importance of personal advice. The results show, that it is important to focus on each customer or potential customer with the help of personal advice and tailor the services to each one and cost-effective services and courses.

This final question yielded majority of the respondents were not sure, whether they would like to become a member of the company or not in the future. However, about 28% would very likely or somewhat likely consider membership in the future. The potential seems to exist, but Excellence Finland should concentrate on marketing their membership services to these potential customers.

7.5 Conclusions, international partners

The brand awareness was rather low, considering that partners should know who they co-operate with. Mostly the Excellence Finland was known somewhat or very little (66%). In addition, the results show, how none of the respondents knew the company extremely well. This is quite surprising. However, altogether 33% knew the company very well or well. To conclude, this is something to work within the company, the partners could know better Excellence Finland.

International partners mostly think, that the company is active, dynamic, fresh, modern, impressive and, also visible. It is very encouraging, that so many mentions were this positive. Secondly, cooperation skills likewise open and supportive atmosphere were mentioned. However, the same amount of mentions, were also given to slow, inflexible and serious. This is something that has been mentioned also on behalf of the potential customers as well as current customers. There is room now to analyse, how this is so and what to do within the company regarding personnel or operations to improve the current situation.

The acquaintance of the current partners was commonly made on EOQ or ETQM meetings or congresses (European Organization for Quality). One answer, approximately 14% of the answers, was from colleagues. Also, quite close result was through colleagues. Internet pages of the Excellence Finland were the most followed media channel among this target group, so the main concern should be in the development of these sites, perhaps translating more content in English and thus becoming more international player.

The media visibility was considered mostly limited with 67%, and no one thought the current media visibility is very good, good or even quite good. This is quite a concerning result and hardly is not an expected result. Although, 33% thought the media visibility was estimated very good. There seems to be improvement opportunity to keep contact to the international partners more often in the future, because the results reveal how some had lost connection within last two years. However, the last contact was experienced positive and

experienced the cooperation was useful, professional, very open, positive likewise the organizational skills were evaluated as good. Furthermore, the result clearly shows, how the international partners have high trust on Excellence Finland.

As to be expected, the most replies evaluated Excellence Finland a trustful, impressive and modern operator. However, *honest* and *old fashioned* showed the same amount of mentions. It means, the brand image needs updating for not being an old-fashioned operator. The improvement hints for the future where, to make a yearly online report about main activities. Secondly, the brand strengthening was suggested by getting support from the state. The most encouraging is the one third would very likely buy the services in the future, but 66% were not sure or even would very unlikely buy them in the future. This is partly not the expected result and needs analyses within the company, what could be done better.

7.6 Further study suggestions

The findings of this research provide information for the case company to understand the dimensions of brand awareness and brand image and the questionnaire reveals the concrete results of the three target groups, how to develop the current brand image. However, the theoretical part is limited, since the subjects are very wide and for example, Brand Strategy models would be another study to investigate further. Also, the Cluster analysis would reveal more exact information to identify customer groups on their loyalty towards the brand. The international comparisons towards the research subject was very limited, since quite few respondents reacted to the online questionnaire. Perhaps, in the future interview would be another option to gain more responses from the international partners. Also, as earlier mentioned, the current English version of the case company homepage is very narrow and limited, and some information is not available in English. Perhaps totally new English homepage version on Excellence Finland could be considered, since currently, only one page of introduction of Excellence Finland's operations is available in English. Other related terms like brand recognition and brand loyalty are also very wide subjects and comprise many dimensions, theories and models, which could be useful further studies to develop brand awareness and brand image.

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APPENDICES

COVER LETTER, CUSTOMERS

ASIAKKAAT

Otsikko: Laatukeskuksen brändiuudistuskysely

Lähettäjä: Laatukeskus / info@laatukeskus.fi

Hyvä vastaanottaja,

Me täällä Laatukeskuksessa olemme käynnistäneet 50-vuotisjuhlavuotemme kunniaksi brändiuudistuksen, sillä haluamme kehittää näkyvyyttämme ja imagoamme positiiviseen suuntaan palvellaksemme asiakkaitamme parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla myös seuraavat 50 vuotta.

Sinulla on nyt ainutlaatuinen mahdollisuus vaikuttaa uudistusprojektiimme omalla näkemykselläsi. Kutsumme sinut mukaan brändiuudistuskyselyymme, joka toteutetaan yhteistyössä Kymenlaakson Ammattikorkeakoulun kanssa.

Kyselyyn pääset vastaamaan tästä: <https://my.surveypal.com/Br%C3%A4ndikysely---Nykyiset-asiakkaat>

(Mikäli kysely ei avaudu oheisesta linkistä, voit kopioida osoitteen suoraan internet-selaimen osoitekenttään hiiren oikealla näppäimellä.)

Käsitlemme vastaukset ehdottoman luottamuksellisina ja tuloksia hyödynnetään Laatukeskuksen imagon, tunnettuuden ja maineen kokonaisvaltaisessa kehittämisessä. Vastaathan viimeistään sunnuntaina 8.5.2016.

Arvomme kaikkien vastanneiden kesken pääsylipun kansainvälisen kongressimme 2. päivään, jonka ohjelmassa mm. tämän kyselyn tulokset sekä pääpuhujina Edward Snowden sekä Robert Tercek. Lisäksi arvomme 5 kpl kirjapalkintoja. Ilmoitamme voittajille henkilökohtaisesti. Kyselyn tulokset julkaistaan kansainvälisessä laatukongressissa Finlandia-talolla 1.-2.6.2016. Lisätietoa asiasta: <http://www.quality2016.eu>.

Kiitos osallistumisestasi imagomme kehittämiseen ja onnea arvontaan.

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LAATUKESKUS EXCELLENCE FINLAND

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Degree in International Business Management

COVER LETTER, POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

POTENTIAALISET

Otsikko: Laatukeskuksen brändiuudistuskysely
Lähettilä: Laatukeskus / info@laatukeskus.fi

Hyvä vastaanottaja,

Me täällä Laatukeskuksessa olemme aloittaneet 50-vuotisjuhlavuotemme kunniaksi brändiuudistuksen, sillä haluamme kehittää näkyvyyttämme ja imagoamme positiiviseen suuntaan palvellaksemme niin nykyisiä kuin tulevia asiakkaitamme parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla myös seuraavat 50 vuotta.

Sinulla on nyt ainutlaatuinen mahdollisuus vaikuttaa uudistusprojektiimme omalla näkemykselläsi. Kutsumme sinut mukaan brändiuudistuskyselyymme, joka toteutetaan yhteistyössä Kymenlaakson Ammattikorkeakoulun kanssa.

Kyselyyn pääset vastaamaan tästä: <https://my.surveypal.com/Br%C3%A4ndikysely---Potentiaaliset-asiakkaat>)

(Mikäli kysely ei avaudu oheisesta linkistä, voit kopioida osoitteen suoraan internet-selaimen osoitekenttään hiiren oikealla näppäimellä.)

Käsitlemme vastaukset ehdottoman luottamuksellisina ja tuloksia hyödynnetään Laatukeskuksen imagon, tunnettuuden ja maineen kokonaisvaltaisessa kehittämisessä.

Vastausaikaa sinulla maanantaihin 9. toukokuuta saakka, kysely sulkeutuu 10.5.2016.

Arvomme kaikkien vastanneiden kesken pääsylipun kansainvälisen kongressimme 2. päivään, jonka ohjelmassa mm. tämän kyselyn tulokset sekä tilaisuuden pääpuhujina Edward Snowden sekä Robert Tercek. Lisäksi arvomme 5 kpl kirjepalkintoja. Ilmoitamme voittajille henkilökohtaisesti.

Kyselyn tulokset julkaistaan kansainvälisessä laatukongressissa Finlandia-talolla 1.-2.6.2016. Lisätietoa asiasta: <http://www.quality2016.eu>

Kiitos osallistumisestasi imagomme kehittämiseen ja onnea arvontaan.

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COVER LETTER, INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

KANSAINVÄLISET

Otsikko: Excellence Finland Brand Renewal Survey
Lähettiläjä: Excellence Finland / info@laatukeskus.fi

Dear partner,

We here in Excellence Finland have started to celebrate our 50th working anniversary and in the honor of that, we have started a brand renewal project. Our goal is to develop our visibility and image into positive direction to serve our customers in the best possible way also for the next 50 years.

You now have a unique opportunity to influence in our project with your own views, and we invite you to our brand image survey. This survey is implemented in co-operation with the Master School of Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences.

You can access the survey by clicking here: <https://my.surveypal.com/Br%C3%A4ndikysely---International-partners>

We will handle the answers highly confidentially and the results will be utilized in the holistic development of Excellence Finland's image, brand recognition and reputation. The survey closes at 11th of May 2016, at 11:59 pm.

The results of the survey are available on 1st of June 2016 and published in the International Quality Congress in Finlandia Hall in Helsinki 1.-2.6.2016. For more information please see: <http://www.quality2016.eu/>

Thank you for participating in the development of our image.

Miia Rosenqvist – director, conferences and communication
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LAATUKESKUS EXCELLENCE FINLAND

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Master of Business Administration
Degree in International Business Management

Survey Pal Questions: Current customers

Arvioi, miten hyvin tunnet Laatukeskuksen?

- ☐ Erittäin hyvin
- ☐ Jokseenkin hyvin
- ☐ Hyvin
- ☐ Jossain määrin
- ☐ Heikosti
- ☐ En ollenkaan













Miten kuvailisit Laatuokeskuksen yrityskuvaa / imagoa? Käytä kolmea vapaavalintaista adjektiivia.

Mistä / miten kuulit Laatuokeskuksesta?

Tietämyksesi ja mielikuvasi perusteella, miten arvioisit Laatukeskuksen brändiä / imagoa?

- ☐ Erinomainen
- ☐ Hyvä
- ☐ Neutraali
- ☐ Tyydyttävä
- ☐ Heikko

Kuinka seuraat Laatukeskuksen medianavia? Arvioi asteikolla 1-5. (1=en lainkaan, 2=satunnaisesti, 3=joskus, 4=melko usein, 5=monta kertaa viikossa, 6=päivittäin)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Internet						
Facebook						

Twitter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Laatulehti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jokin muu, mikä?						
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Kuinka arvioisit Laatukeskuksen medianäkyvyyden?

- ☐ Erittäin hyvä
- ☐ Hyvä
- ☐ Melko hyvä
- ☐ Melko huono
- ☐ Heikko
- ☐ Erittäin heikko

Onko Laatukeskus mielestänne luotettava organisaatio?

- ☐ Täysin samaa mieltä
- ☐ Samaa mieltä
- ☐ Jokseenkin samaa mieltä
- ☐ En osaa sanoa
- ☐ Eri mieltä
- ☐ Täysin eri mieltä

Mitä palveluistamme olette käyttäneet viimeisen kahden vuoden aikana? Voit valita myös usean vaihtoehdon.

☐ Seminaarit

☐ Jäsenpalvelut

☐ Arviointipalvelut

☐ Kurssit ja valmennukset

☐ Asiantuntijapalvelut

☐ Laatulehti

☐ Muu, mikä?

Oliko tilaisuus / palvelu hyvin toteutettu, hyödyllinen ja miksi?

Kuinka kehittäisit Laatukeskuksen imagoa?

Kuinka todennäköistä on, että ostaisit Laatukeskuksen palveluja tulevaisuudessa?

☐ Erittäin todennäköistä

☐ Jokseenkin todennäköistä

☐ En osaa sanoa

☐ Jokseenkin epätodennäköistä

☐ Erittäin epätodennäköistä

Kuinka todennäköistä on, että suosittelisit Laatuyhdistyksen jäsenyyttä tai Laatukeskuksen palveluja?

☐ Erittäin todennäköistä

☐ Jokseenkin todennäköistä

☐ En osaa sanoa

☐ Jokseenkin epätodennäköistä

☐ Erittäin epätodennäköistä

Tämän hetkinen asemasi yrityksessänne

☐ Ylin johto

☐ Keskijohto

☐ Asiantuntija

☐ Toimihenkilö

☐ Jokin muu

Sukupuoli

☐ Nainen

☐ Mies

Ikä

☐ alle 34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65+

Survey Pal Questions: Potential customers

Miten kuvailisit Laatukeskuksen yrityskuvaa / imagoa? Käytä kolmea vapaavalintaista adjektiivia.

Mistä kuultit Laatukeskuksesta ensimmäistä kertaa?

- ☐ Internet
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Laatulehti
- ☐ Asiakastapaaminen
- ☐ Tuttava / perhe
- ☐ Kollega
- ☐ Yhteistyökumppani
- ☐ Tunnen vain nimeltä
- ☐ Jostain muualta, mistä?

Arvioi, miten hyvin tunnet Laatukeskuksen?

- ☐ Erittäin hyvin
- ☐ Jokseenkin hyvin
- ☐ Hyvin
- ☐ Jossain määrin
- ☐ Heikosti

☐ En ollenkaan

Tietämyksesi ja mielikuvasi perusteella, miten arvioisit Laatukeskuksen brändiä / imagoa?

☐ Erinomainen

☐ Hyvä

☐ Neutraali

☐ Tyydyttävä

☐ Heikko

Hyödynnetäänkö yrityksessänne toiminnan kehittämisen työkaluja?

☐ Kyllä

☐ Ei

☐ En osaa sanoa

Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen kyllä, kerro lyhyesti mitä työkaluja hyödynnätte ja miten.

Kehitättekö oman organisaationne prosesseja?

☐ Kyllä

☐ Ei

☐ En osaa sanoa

Jos vastasit edelliseen kysymykseen kyllä, kerro lyhyesti mitä prosessien kehittäminen tarkoittaa organisaatiossanne.

Mitkä Laatukeskuksen palvelut mahdollisesti kiinnostaisivat sinua? Voit valita useamman vaihtoehdon.

☐ LEAN

☐ Prosessien kehittäminen

☐ Toimintajärjestelmien kehittäminen

☐ Seminaarit

☐ Jäsenpalvelut

☐ Arviointipalvelut

☐ Kurssit ja valmennukset

☐ Asiantuntijapalvelut

☐ Innovaatiokilpailu

☐ Jokin muu palvelu / tuote, mikä?

Kuinka tärkeänä koet henkilökohtaisen neuvonnan yhteistyökumppania valitessa?

☐ Erittäin tärkeänä

☐ Tärkeänä

☐ Jokseenkin tärkeänä

☐ En kovinkaan tärkeänä

☐ En lainkaan tärkeänä

Kuinka suuri rooli on mielestäsi yrityksen käyttämällä tekniikalla ja työkaluilla yhteistyökumppanin valinnassa?

☐ Erittäin tärkeä

☐ Tärkeä

☐ Jokseenkin tärkeä

☐ En kovinkaan tärkeä

☐ En lainkaan tärkeä

Valitessanne yhteistyökumppania muiden joukosta, kuinka suuri rooli on kustannuksilla?

- ☐ Erittäin tärkeä
- ☐ Tärkeä
- ☐ Jokseenkin tärkeä
- ☐ En kovinkaan tärkeä
- ☐ En lainkaan tärkeä

Kuinka todennäköistä on, että liittyisitte Laatuyhdistyksen jäseneksi tulevaisuudessa?

- ☐ Erittäin todennäköistä
- ☐ Jokseenkin todennäköistä
- ☐ En osaa sanoa
- ☐ Jokseenkin epätodennäköistä
- ☐ Erittäin epätodennäköistä

Tämän hetkinen asemasi yrityksessänne

- ☐ Ylin johto
- ☐ Keskijohto
- ☐ Asiantuntija
- ☐ Toimihenkilö
- ☐ Jokin muu

Sukupuoli

☐ Nainen

☐ Mies

Ikä

☐ alle 34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65+

Survey Pal Questions: International Partners

[illegible]

How would you estimate the media visibility of Excellence Finland?

- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Quite good
- ☐ Limited
- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Very poor

Have you cooperated with Excellence Finland within recent two years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you answered yes, do you feel the cooperation was useful to your organization?

If you answered no, would you think cooperation with us to be useful?

Do you think Excellence Finland is a trustworthy organization?

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Undecided
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

What kind of operator do you currently experience Excellence Finland?

- ☐ trustful
- ☐ honest
- ☐ impressive
- ☐ old fashioned
- ☐ modern

How would you develop the corporate image of Excellence Finland?

How likely is it, that you would buy Excellence Finland's services in the future?

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ I do not know
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely

Your position in your own organization

- ☐ Senior Management level
- ☐ Middle Management level
- ☐ Expert level
- ☐ Employee level
- ☐ Not applicable

Your gender

☐ Female

☐ Male

Your age

☐ under 34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65+